

ESSAYS AND POEMS

BY

FRANCES MARY OWEN



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ESSAYS AND POEMS

BY

FRANCES MARY OWEN.

Authoress of

"John Keats, a Study," "Across the Hills," "Hero and Patriot,"
"A Lost Piece of Silver," &c., &c.

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TO HER FRIENDS.

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PREFACE.

OF the Essays and Poems contained in the following pages, only a small number were intended for publication, and of those only one or two received their final revision at the hands of the writer. But it has been thought advisable to publish them in their present form, not only, or chiefly, for their intrinsic merit, but as an echo from the life which has left its true memorial in the hearts of all with whom it came in contact. It is believed that there is much to interest those to whom Frances Mary Owen is unknown, or only a literary name; while to that ever widening circle of friends, whom, as life went on, her presence touched 'to change or bless,' her own words will be the best and most fitting memorial.

Of that noble heart's rare gift of sympathy and rarer power of love, no one who knew her ever found the end, and she admitted no limit in the range of friendship. In the larger world of work and thought, and the obscure homes of suffering or sin, her loss speaks still with equal and unchanging eloquence.

Of her it is enough to say,

"He shall ascend who loves with truest love,
Leaving all paths for that which Christ has
trod,
For he who lifts his brother's soul above
Stands even now upon the hill of God."

M. VON G.

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ON THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOME
OF THE HEROINES OF SHAKESPERE
AND GEORGE ELIOT.

PROFESSOR Dowden, in writing on the mind and art of Shakespere, has said 'Shakespere's men have a history, moral growth or moral decay : his women act or are acted upon, but seldom grow and are transformed. We get from Shakespere no histories of a woman's soul like the history of Romola or of Maggie Tulliver or of Dorothea Brooke. Shakespere *creates* his women by a single strong or exquisite inspiration, he studies his men.'

This is true in the majority of instances. In Shakespere the woman is the realization of an ideal. She is a thought, embodied by the writer for the purposes of the play ; she is an idea in maturity, her character is presented to begin with 'at its best and fullest.' But in the novel which is essentially the production of a reflective age, it is not enough to have a woman 'at her best and fullest,' we must learn how she reached it. We must see the long hard process by which she gains her

true life. Most of Shakespeare's women have already attained, are already made perfect, George Eliot shows the slow discipline and teaching of a life-time. Most of Shakespeare's women stand in the full sunshine, George Eliot's come from darkness into light, with the sadness and sorrow of the shadows about them, but with the glow on their faces and 'that sad patient loving strength which holds the clue of life.' But as yet Professor Dowden has hardly proved his assertion that 'we get from Shakespeare *no* histories of a woman's soul.' We think that we can show that moral growth is distinctly to be traced in some of his heroines, and it may be interesting to enquire how far we could find parallels amongst them for George Eliot's careful studies of developing female nature.

Whose is the sweet girlish face in the dark gondola that comes floating towards us from amongst the rich palaces of Venice? A face little troubled by sorrow as yet, full of sympathy and love, full of brightness and enjoyment of life ; that

“Whiter skin of hers than snow
And smooth as monumental alabaster.

A maiden never bold,
Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
Blushed at herself."

It is old Brabantio's daughter and Othello's love, the gentle Desdemona. Few of Shakespere's women are so loveable, and we are nearly as much puzzled as Brabantio

to know how she came to love the swarthy Moor. But perhaps he himself gives us the clue—she pitied him.

“My story being done

She gave me for my pains a world of sighs ;

She swore in faith 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,

'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful ;

She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished

That heaven had made her such a man.”

Hers was one of those natures which longed with a passion of self-abnegation to make others happy. Iago rightly described her as ‘so free, so apt, so blessed a disposition. She holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested.’ And ‘of her own goodness’ he was to ‘make the net’

“That shall enmesh them all.”

How beautiful is the first picture drawn of her by Othello in his ‘round unvarnished tale.’ ‘Oft invited’ by old Brabantio to the house in Venice, we can picture him charming the old man with his stories of ‘moving accidents by flood and field,’ ‘of being taken by the insolent foe and sold to slavery,’ and of the wonders he had seen. And Desdemona ‘seriously inclines’ to listen to him, but is called away to her household affairs just at the most interesting part, so that she has to make ‘a prayer of earnest heart’ that all the story may be told her and it ‘beguiles her of her tears.’ This was indeed a hero—this was a man on whom she could lavish all the store of hero-worship, of sympathy, and of pity

which the 'wealthy curled darlings of Venice' could never win from her, but which were stored up in her tender heart. As Othello says,

"She thanked me
And bade me if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.
She loved me for the dangers I had passed
And I loved her that she did pity them."

But having once lavished her wealth of love and pity upon the Moor, Desdemona became his own indeed with true devoted loyalty: the 'heart of her husband might have safely trusted in her.'

She cannot stay behind in time of danger. She must follow him to Cyprus. It is impossible to think that Desdemona deceived her father about her feeling for Othello, as Iago says she did. She *did* naturally shrink from him until divine pity and sympathy overcame her other feelings, and then she loved him and would follow him to the death; for her heart was 'subdued even to the very quality' of her lord.

And so she goes to Cyprus and is welcomed by Cassio, as 'our great captain's captain,' and there is sunshine in her life for a little while. She can laugh with Iago; she can be friendly with Cassio: she is only thinking of Othello all the time. He comes, and her deep feeling has no words but

"My dear Othello."

She is very happy.

“The heavens forbid
But that our loves and comforts should increase
Even as our days do grow.”

Yet all the time Cassio understood Desdemona's real beauty far more than Othello did. Othello speaks of her as ‘a fair woman, a fine woman, a sweet woman,’ ‘the world hath not a sweeter creature,’ but to Cassio she had a touch of another world, to him she was ‘the divine Desdemona’ she was

“The maid
That paragon's description and wild fame ;
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens
And in the essential vesture of creation
Does tire the ingener.”

And Cassio found out this from sympathy, because he too by Iago's confession

“had a daily beauty in his life”

which made Iago ‘ugly.’

And so Desdemona for a little while is happy, as happy as even her craving woman's heart can desire ; but Iago is near, and even now has begun his plot. Cassio is in trouble, and Desdemona is to plead for Cassio with Othello. And this she does, with all her heart ; she assures him that ‘his solicitor shall rather die than give his cause away.’ She is so assured of her own position, so safe in her husband's love, she thinks, that she can afford to be very warm in her friendship, and love has only intensified that power of friendship in her. She is playfully importunate with Othello.

“What ! Michael Cassio
That came a wooing with you and so many a time
When I have spoken of you disparagingly
Hath ta'en your part, to have so much to do
To bring *him* in.”

And Othello will deny her nothing. He shall come. It is Desdemona's last bright hour. That ‘Farewell, my Desdemona’ is the true good-bye between the Othello she had loved and herself, and as she closes the door he says—

“Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee, and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.”

And now the trouble is at hand ; ‘it is the little rift within the lute.’ Iago's poison has begun to work. Othello is jealous of Cassio. There is no need to recount that diabolical plot. No impersonation of Satan has ever equalled Iago. And yet the presence of Desdemona seems almost to have won Othello back to her.

“Desdemona comes.
If she be false, O then heaven mocks itself.
I'll not believe it.”

How pathetic is the scene in which Desdemona wants to bind the little handkerchief round her husband's head : we can almost hear the gentle voice saying ‘I am very sorry that you are not well.’ And her trust in Othello's nature too, how strong and loyal it is, when she loses the charmed handkerchief.

“And but my noble Moor
Is true of mind and made of no such baseness
As jealous creatures are, it were enough
To put him to ill thinking.”

Emilia asks, ‘Is he not jealous?’ And Desdemona answers with a ring of scorn and pride in her voice, ‘Who? He?’

And then Othello comes to her dissembling: how unconscious she is, though there is wistfulness in her answer when he says her hand is moist

“It yet hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow.”

Once she falters a little from the truth. She is terrified at the change in Othello. She says she could fetch the handkerchief, and he knows that she cannot. Yet all the time her chief thoughts are not for herself, but for others. She must help Cassio, even though it may displease her lord

“So help me, every spirit sanctified,
As I have spoken for you all my best

What I can do, I will, and more I will
Than for myself I dare.”

Brave loving heart, that is treading its way into the darkness. What has troubled Othello? It must be some state affair. She must not look for too much. Of course husbands could not be expected to be lovers always.

“Nay, we must think men are not gods,
Nor of them look for such observances
As fit the bridal.”

So she begins to find excuses for him, and does it to the end.

And now the poison begins to work its final result. Othello's heart is on fire. Desdemona is to die.

And yet he enumerates her perfections one by one.

"Hang her I do but say what she is. So delicate with her needle. An admirable musician."

"Oh! she will sing the savageness out of a bear,
Of so high and plenteous wit and invention

Iago. She's the worst for all this

Oth. O! a thousand, thousand times: and then of so gentle
a condition.

Iago. Ay, too gentle.

Oth. Nay, that's certain. But yet the pity of it, Iago,
O, Iago, the pity of it, Iago."

And still Desdemona is innocent and unconscious. Still she is pleading for her friend, saying that for the love she bears to Cassio, 'she would do much to make him at one with Othello.' And when good news comes to Cassio from Venice, Desdemona looks to Othello for sympathy in her gladness and he strikes her.

"I have not deserved this"

is all she says; but her heart is broken: there is no trace of the old Desdemona, 'tender, fair, and happy,' in the sad woman who denies his accusations and endeavours to hide her sorrows from Emilia. It was a failure, that endeavour to keep back her agony. The first sentence is faltered.

"Faith half asleep." And then she breaks down

"Who is thy Lord?"

"I have none. Do not talk to me, Emilia

I cannot weep."

"Prithee, to night

Lay on my bed my wedding sheets.

'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet."

But she will make one appeal to Iago, whom she believes her friend. Had there been anything human in Iago, he could not have resisted her. She begins in an earnest, impulsive way, still endeavouring to shield Othello.

"Those that do teach young babes

Do it with gentle means and easy tasks :

He might have chid me so ; for in good faith

I am a child to chiding."

Was it possible for him to feel nothing, when Emilia says this suspicion of Othello's is the 'work of some eternal villain, some busy and insinuating rogue,' and Desdemona prays

'If any such there be, heaven pardon him' and then goes on

"O good Iago

What shall I do to win my lord again?

Good friend, go to him, for by this light of heaven,

I know not how I lost him.

Unkindness may do much,

And his unkindness may defeat my life

But never taint my love."

Has not the soul of Desdemona grown in suffering? Is not this a noble woman's heart at its noblest? Life! what was that when weighed with love? Her *life* defeated: what did that matter? But 'many waters could not quench her love.'

Iago gives her no help, and the night comes on. Still she speaks of her love to Emilia, even with the dark foreboding of death at hand, and makes her pathetic little request.

"Good faith, how foolish are our minds.
If I do die before thee, prithee shroud me
In one of these same sheets."

Emilia rallies her and mocks at her fears. But the shadow of death is over Desdemona. She recalls the sad little song of her mother's maid, Barbara, who died singing it—it will not go from her mind. But Emilia must not think she is sad. So she discusses Lodovico who has come from Venice, and yet breaks out suddenly into the song.

"Sing willow, willow, willow,
'Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve'
Nay, that's not next."

Then she *must* speak. This burden is greater than she can bear: the pure soul is writhing under the contact of sin. The loneliness of that hour could never be known. It was not only death from which she shrank, and Emilia her best friend could understand nothing of the desolation in her heart. Yet out of that

hour of darkness, it is the divine Desdemona, Desdemona 'clad in the essential vesture of creation,' that rises to the highest. When Emilia says,

"Then let men use us well. Else let them know
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so."

Desdemona answers,

"Good night, good night, Heaven me such uses send
Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend."

Is it in vain that sad young defeated life, when it comes to utter such a prayer as this?—has it not rather solved the mystery of evil?

And then comes the end.

'I kissed thee ere I killed thee,' says Othello. If Desdemona had known of those kisses, it would have been easier to die: but to her there was no mercy, no light in that awful shadow. In vain she cries for pity. In vain she tells Othello

"I never loved Cassio
But with such general warranty of heaven
As I might love."

She dies, loyal with her last breath to him she loved.
Emilia says,

"O who hath done this deed,"

and Desdemona answers,

"Nobody, I myself, farewell.
Commend me to my kind lord. O farewell."

Is there any one of George Eliot's characters, who can

share our pity with this martyred girl-wife? It is not only in death that hearts are smothered, but in life also. 'In the loving heart-beats and sobs after unattained 'goodness which trembled off and were dispersed among 'hindrances:' in the same passionate hero-worship, the same high loyalty and devotion, the same large-heartedness and capability for friendship, the same longing for sympathy and lonely endurance of suffering, the same power 'to distil the soul of goodness from things evil.' Dorothea Casaubon may claim kindred with the 'divine' Desdemona. Their surroundings are totally dissimilar. Desdemona's character has the fire of southern life with its weaknesses. Dorothea's is the calmer, stronger, and more fearless nature of the Saxon. Desdemona was living in an atmosphere of fervid passion, Dorothea in coldness and isolation. Othello's story was that he 'loved not wisely, but too well.' Dorothea's husband was incapable of loving at all. Othello had 'a great heart,' and Dorothea's husband had none. But it must have been as foreign to the real nature of Dorothea to love the frigid scholar, as it was to Desdemona to love the swarthy Moor: in both it was a great impulse of self-abnegation which moved them, and having once given themselves, their loyalty was inflexible.

With the same pathetic sympathy which Desdemona gave to the story of Othello's wrongs, Dorothea read Mr. Casaubon's icy proposal of marriage. 'All her 'passion was transfused through a mind struggling 'towards an ideal life: the radiance of her transfigured

‘girlhood fell on the first object that came within its ‘level.’ How the noble heart spoke out in those few simple words in which she accepted Mr. Casaubon!

And so the sacrifice is made, and before six weeks are over, Dorothea finds that her life is being smothered. She is in Rome. ‘The weight of unintelligible Rome’ lies heavily on her. Vainly she tries to draw her life more closely to her husband’s; there is nothing to which it can cling; her sacrifice has been made in vain, and to the heart which finds this out, life is very sad. But Dorothea’s nature is slow to acknowledge her failure, it is too large in its power of giving to admit the idea of sacrifice. Only the shadows are gathering about her, she hardly knows why.

“When Mr. Casaubon said, ‘Does this interest you, Dorothea? Shall we stay a little longer? I am ready to ‘stay if you wish it,’ it seemed to her as if going or staying were alike dreary. Or, ‘should you like to go to the Farnesina, Dorothea? It contains celebrated ‘frescoes designed or painted by Raphael, which most ‘persons think it worth while to visit?’ ‘But do *you* ‘care about them?’ was always Dorothea’s question.”

And then Michael Cassio comes on the scene in the person of Will Ladislaw, the young, sympathetic, generous nature, which understand Dorothea at any rate in part, and she cares for him with ‘the general warranty of heaven,’ and tries to plead his cause with Mr. Casaubon, ‘and more she does than for herself she dares. Lydgate’s subsequent description of Dorothea

might almost stand for Cassio's estimate of Desdemona.

'This young creature has a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary. She evidently thinks nothing of her own future, and would pledge away half her income at once, as if she wanted nothing for herself but a chair to sit in, from which she can look down with those clear eyes at the poor mortals who pray to her. She seems to have, what I never saw in any woman before, a fountain of friendship towards men, a man can make a friend of her.'

When Will Ladislaw has shocked her loyalty to Mr. Casaubon by some slighting remarks upon his occupation, with what dignity and pathos Dorothea reproves him, reminding us of Desdemona's excuses for Othello. There is another character in Shakespeare whom George Eliot herself has linked with the name of Dorothea, Cato's daughter, Portia.

But Portia's fate was an easier one than Dorothea's. She was loved by Brutus. She had but to plead with him that she had a right to share his secrets, that 'she was himself, that she would not dwell in the suburbs or his good pleasure ;' that she could bear any pain for him and he recognizes at once the justice of her claim—of her highest claim—to share his suffering.

" O ye gods, render me worthy
Of this noble wife."

he cries, and he trusted her with all. The weight of his secret killed her. But it was not hard to die when she

had been so loved. In life and in death she was blessed among women. 'So fathered and so husbanded,' she had not lived in vain. And she had proved herself worthy. If Dorothea had been married to a nature as noble as her own, she might have been a Portia. She too had the same unfaltering love to give, the same right to equality with the highest in human nature; the same endurance, the same trustworthiness. But in her marriage there was limitation; she was her husband's, to keep with him at meals and talk to him sometimes. There was nothing more to which she could appeal, though her fervent, hopeful heart was long in finding this out. Portia's love was triumphant, was fulfilled; Dorothea's was defeated: therefore she seems to be more closely linked with Desdemona.

The Dorothea who wrestled with herself all through the long, lonely evening after her husband had rejected her aid and sympathy in his illness 'with unresponsive hardness,' and finally went out to meet him as he came upstairs, was a greater woman than she who had accepted him at first. She who had found out 'that belief of her own which comforted her,' 'that by desiring 'what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know 'what it is, and cannot do what we would, we are part of 'the divine power against evil, widening the skirts of 'light and making the struggle with darkness narrower,' was nearer to the light than in the days when her young heart was filled with vague longings for some larger purpose, some vast ideal good.

'My lord is not my lord' is the hardest thing that Desdemona ever says of Othello. And 'what have I done? What am I, that he should treat me so?' 'He never knows what is in my mind, he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me,' is the bitterest cry of this part of Dorothea's life. Were they not both defeated lives? And yet through the darkness did not they both press onwards? Desdemona's prayer wrung from the first shock of the knowledge of evil finds its counterpart in the change in Dorothea's soul when later on she thinks that Will Ladislaw has fallen from the right and is not what she believed him to be. 'In that hour of darkness she said to her own irremediable grief that it should make her more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort. . . . Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light, and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining: she had not the less an active life before her because she had buried a private joy.'

Dorothea had not come to the highest in her life until she went to Rosamond Vincy and kissed her, and won her even passingly to a nobler way of thinking: having attained this, having passed out of the limits of herself into the great general soul of humanity, she had found

the clue of life, and the accident of earthly happiness which came to her afterwards, matters as little as Desdemona's death, when the joy of her life had been killed beforehand. There is a picture in Venice which lights up the gloom of the church of Santa Maria Formosa. It is the picture of a woman who suffered martyrdom, Santa Barbara. George Eliot has said of Dorothea, in one of her great moments of self-abnegation, 'She might have been Santa Barbara standing by her tower.' In that fair face there is a look which is seldom to be seen in a picture—utter unconsciousness of individuality and a happy union with general life. In the eyes, there is a gathered gladness as if they had looked past suffering and seen joy which nothing could take away. It is not from lack of knowledge, for that full open brow speaks of more than common thought : it is the larger knowledge which 'has found the soul of goodness in things evil.' And so she stands regally, with her palm branch in her hand, and her eyes smile, as though she said to all who suffer, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad.' It is thus that we may think of Dorothea.

We have seen how love defeated may furnish the stimulus to moral growth : let us now take an instance of the stimulus furnished by love accomplished. I do not think we can find a better one than in the character of Beatrice in 'Much Ado about Nothing.' She is as refreshing as a mountain stream, and as pure and good. A girl fenced off from earthly

contact by a merry heart, reticent of everything but fun, which bubbles over from her with a never-ceasing flow, except when the deep true heart is moved and stirred out of itself by the suffering of another: and then Beatrice is grave enough. Benedick was right when he called her May, for she is like sunshine and flowers and pleasant breezes, a breath of spring itself. How she bursts upon us with a laugh, 'I pray you is 'Signor Montanto returned from the wars or no? I 'pray you how many hath he killed and eaten in these 'wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed I 'promised to *eat* all of his killing.'

Can we not well believe that in her last conflict with her friend four of his five wits went halting off, and now is the whole man governed with one? She can make fun about Benedick readily enough, but she desires very earnestly to know who is his companion now, though she hides her anxiety with a laugh, which blinds the messenger, 'I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.'

Bea. 'No, an he were I should burn my study. But I pray you who is his companion?' And then Benedick comes himself, and we wonder if there was no tremble of joy in Beatrice's voice, as she gave him her saucy greeting, 'I wonder that you will still be talking, Signor Benedick; nobody marks you.' 'What, my dear Lady Disdain, are you yet living?' How her merry eyes must have sparkled as she answered, 'Is it possible disdain should die, when she hath such meet food to

feed it as Signor Benedick?' And so the wordy war goes on, but we can guess why it was that Benedick had no eyes for Hero during that scene. And how irresistible Beatrice is about leading her apes into hell. When her uncle says, 'Well then, go you into hell?' Beatrice answers 'No, but to the gate, and then will the Devil meet me and say, 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven: here's no place for you maids. So deliver I up my apes, and away to St. Peter for the heavens; he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we merry as the day is long.' But she will take no husband, she says, till God make men of some other metal than earth. Adam's sons are her brethren and she would hold it a sin to match with her kindred. And what a fascinating combination of grave and gay she is in the scene with Don Pedro and her cousins. There is just a touch of sadness through it—a little tacit reproach for the way she is misunderstood by every one. Has she really lost the heart of Benedick? He 'had lent it to her awhile,' that was all. But she has a merry heart of her own. She 'thanks it, poor fool, that it keeps on the windy side of care.' Was there not a little touch of self-pity in those words '*poor fool?*' Do we not all sometimes stand apart from ourselves and pity our own sorrows. But Beatrice will cover hers from all prying eyes, however kind. No one but herself shall know the little hidden sigh, when she says—

'Good Lord, for alliance. There goes every one to

the world but I, and I am sunburnt. I may sit in a corner and cry heigh-ho for a husband.' She can then turn round with a merry defiance on Don Pedro, when he says, 'Will you have me, lady?' 'No, my lord, unless I might have another for working days: your grace is too costly to wear every day. But I beseech your grace to pardon me. I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.' 'Born in a merry hour,' yes truly; 'a star danced and under that she was born.' And then with one of her sudden sweet touches of seriousness, she turns her bright face full of sympathy on Claudio and Hero, and gives them her simple heartfelt wishes: 'Cousins, God give you joy.' Turning away as soon as possible when she has said it, perhaps to hide tears which would have belied her uncle's words that there was little of melancholy about her.

Then she too has her share of the good folk's intervention, but woman-like she is readier to accept blame of herself and to be made unhappy by it. To think that her own cousin Hero, who is so happy and to whose happiness she has given her ready sympathy, should so misunderstand her—

"She cannot love
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear'd."

They were cruel words from Hero whom she loved, but there is no resentment shown by Beatrice, only the self-accusation which belongs to great hearts, and a glad

acknowledgment to herself of the love she has tried to smother—

“Can this be true?”

This is the turning point to Beatrice, Benedick loves her; the greatest joy she can ever know is hers; the whole current of her being is deepened and strengthened; from henceforth life is sacred. Gervinus seems to think that Beatrice's awakening did not come till Hero's trouble touched her; but her own words convince us that this revelation of the love of Benedick was the real starting point of growth—

“Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much,
Contempt farewell, and maiden pride adieu :
No glory lives behind the back of such.
And Benedick, love on. I will requite thee,
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
To bind our loves up in a holy band.
For others say thou dost deserve, and I
Believe it better than reportingly.”

Had she not believed it for years? Was it not the little cherished secret of her merry heart? But with the new joy comes also the knowledge of sorrow and the gravity of deepened thought, for the solemnity of life has touched her, and the bright face is clouded as it says ‘Good morrow, sweet Hero’ on Hero's wedding day. The solemnity deepens as that day goes on. The heart so lately stirred by its own great joy is now more truly moved by another's sorrow. It is Beatrice who

helps Hero when she swoons in the church ; it is the voice of Beatrice which first utters its loyal protest that Hero is belied ; it is Beatrice who is most faithful to her all through her hour of darkness.

The Beatrice who confesses her love to Benedick that day is a sadder and graver woman than his 'dear Lady Disdain' ; but she is nobler too,—'It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you ; but believe me not ; and yet I lie not ; I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing. *I am sorry for my cousin.*' Yet she is led on to that best and sweetest of confessions—'I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest.' But she must be quite sure of Benedick's sympathy, that he looks at right and wrong as she does, that the same righteous indignation which is overpowering her is also felt by him, and so the cry of 'Kill Claudio' bursts from her passionate young heart. 'Sweet Hero is wronged, is slandered, is undone' ; and the very depths so lately stirred in the heart of Beatrice cry out for justice. Benedick must have felt that this was indeed the fair and noble woman he had been seeking, even while she poured out her impetuous words, 'O that I were a man, or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake.' She has somewhat recovered her spirits and her hope in the next scene with her lover, for since Benedick has promised to punish Claudio, she is satisfied in him, her anger is partially appeased, and she has probably been able by her warm love and sympathy to comfort Hero :

therefore she is ready for breaking another lance with Benedick : it would have been impossible for her to be in low spirits for long. 'Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably,' says Benedick. 'It appears not in this confession ; there's not one wise man among twenty that will praise himself.'

Ben. 'An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in the time of good neighbours.'

But at the end when the sunshine breaks out again, when sweet Hero is righted and the trouble has all vanished, Beatrice is really her merry self again, though to merry girlhood happy womanhood has succeeded.

'Come,' says Benedick, 'I will have thee, but by this light I take thee for pity.' And saucily as ever she answers, 'I would not deny you, but by this good day I yield upon great persuasion and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.' And so the curtain falls on them. They will be very happy, those two. It is something to be born under a merry star : they will both keep on the windy side of care : they will understand each other's little jests always and will be none the less faithful and loving for having them. The words which Beatrice used at the masked ball will be true to the end : 'We must follow the leaders,' she said. Benedick replied, 'In every good thing'; and Beatrice was only giving the key-note to her own sweet nature when she added, 'Nay, if they ead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.'

For this embodiment of sunshine and breeze there is

no parallel among the sadder modern women of George Eliot. Her heroines have little humour or mirth. Mrs. Poyser and Mrs. Cadwallader show humour of the finest quality, but the slight touches of it which appear in the more complex characters, such as Romola or Gwendolen Harleth, are quickly lost in pathos and infinite yearning. The tragedy of their lives was ever present to the writer, to the exclusion of their lighter play of mind. Dorothea never jests, though Desdemona does. But there is one character, which if it is somewhat harder and sadder from force of circumstances, possesses some of the archness and tenderness of Beatrice. Mary Garth, in *Middlemarch*, is one of George Eliot's carefully delineated portraits, the full beauty of which might be easily overlooked in a cursory acquaintance with the book. In appearance she must have been more like Hero, 'too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, 'and too little for a great praise.' Like Beatrice, 'If you 'made her angry, she would not raise her voice, but 'would probably say one of the bitterest things you 'have ever tasted the flavour of; if you did her a 'kindness she would never forget it;' and old Mrs. Farebrother said of her, 'We must not always ask for 'beauty when a good God has seen fit to make an 'excellent young woman without it.' 'Honesty, truth-telling, fairness was Mary's reigning virtue; she neither 'tried to create illusions nor indulged in them for her 'own behoof, and when she was in a good mood she 'had humour enough in her to laugh at herself.' When

Rosamond asks her during her stay with cross old Peter Featherstone what she has been doing lately, she answers. 'I? O, minding the house, pouring out 'syrup, pretending to be amiable and contented, learning 'to have a bad opinion of everybody.' These are bitterer and sadder words than any that Beatrice ever said, and yet they are not altogether unlike her, and we feel that Mary Garth had something in common with her, when she says to her lover Fred, with a suppressed rippling under-current of laughter pleasant to hear, 'I am not 'angry, except with the ways of the world. I do like to 'be spoken to as if I had common sense. I really often 'feel as if I could understand a little more than I ever 'hear from young gentlemen who have been to College.' And when Fred says he should not have made a bad fellow if he had been rich, we could almost imagine we heard Beatrice laugh out in the answer, 'You would have 'done your duty in that state of life to which it has 'not pleased God to call you.' There is something entirely delightful in the way this little brown girl answers Fred's piteous appeal. 'I like you better than 'any one else, but I know you despise me.' '*Yes, I do a 'little,*' said Mary, nodding with a smile. 'You would 'admire a stupendous fellow who would have wise 'opinions about everything.' '*Yes, I should.*' Mary was 'sewing swiftly, and seemed provokingly mistress of the 'situation.' Would not Beatrice have been just the same? Did not Mary unconsciously almost quote her words, '*He that is less than a man I am not for him,*'

when she told Fred that a man's goodness should come before he expects a woman to love him, and that her father says an idle man ought not to exist, much less be married.

But Mary Garth would have been a very different woman if she had not loved Fred Vincy; this alone saves her from becoming hard and cynical. She can be severe in her righteousness, but the bitterness leaves her as the love increases and deepens. Like Beatrice, the crisis in her life comes when she knows she is loved, but like Beatrice too, she must test the man who professes to love her. And in the troubled times which follow in her life, her character mellows and develops. Abrupt and brusque as she is, there is such genuine truth, such common sense, and helpfulness for daily needs that we always feel with her that we are near

"The clereness and the verray lyght
That in this derké world me wynt and ledyth."

And this moral growth is shown by her increasing sympathy with her father, and her tenderness in all home relations. How the children love her! She kneads peacocks out of bread, she gathers apples in the orchard with little Letty. She tells the story of Rumpelstillskin as no one else can. 'She's an old brick,' says her brother Alfred kissing her, and little Ben beats a chorus on her arm of 'She's an old brick, old brick, old brick.' Her secret is a hidden one like that of Beatrice, covered with pleasant banter. Even

her own mother affirmed that she always laughed at Fred and therefore could not care for him. Fred himself never knew how much she loved him until by hard and honest work for her he had earned a right to hear it. It was the same feeling which, in Beatrice would not let her seek her own happiness until the wrongs she knew of were righted, which made Mary Garth hide her love for Fred until he had learnt to live as an honest man should. Had he become a clergyman against his convictions and thus done violence to his own truth and honesty, she would not have married him, any more than Beatrice would have married Benedick, while he seemed to shrink from doing justice to Hero. The same loyalty which in Beatrice made her true to Hero when even her own father had deserted her, made Mary Garth with high-mindedness refuse to have anything to say to Mr. Featherstone's disposition of his property, made her ready to go off to work as a governess, for the injury which Fred had done her parents, made her put away all thought of Mr. Farebrother's love, and kept her true in heart to poor, erring Fred, who found in her, what Mr. Ruskin says Shakespere makes all his heroines—'an infallibly wise and faithful counsellor, an incorruptably just and pure example, strong always to sanctify even when she cannot save.' But Mary leaves us with a laugh as Beatrice did. And in the pretty glimpse we are given of 'the solid mutual happiness which these two attained,' Fred says that

Mr. Farebrother was ten times worthier of her than he was, and Mary answers 'To be sure he was, and for that reason he could do better without me. But you—I shudder to think what you would have been—a curate in debt for horse-hire and cambric pocket-handkerchiefs.

But let us take another and perhaps the most forcible instance of moral growth in Shakspeare's heroines. We have seen the stimulus of defeated and of accomplished love. There is also another instance of that which can be distilled from the seeming evil of disappointed trust. Let us take the noblest of Shakspeare's creations among women—'a thing ensky'd and sainted'—Isabella in *Measure for Measure*.

Isabella's nature was a spiritual one, and unless we can think of it in this light, we can see nothing of its true beauty. Its purity was like that of sunlit snow. Earth was dear to her, she lived and loved; bodily life ran strongly in her, her 'cheek-roses' proved it: but yet another life was more real to her than this. She must enter a convent; not only so, but she must wish for more strict restraint, and Lucio breaks into this retreat, with the cares of the world, Lucio, come from her brother Claudio in prison to ask her to plead his cause with the Duke's deputy, Angelo. What a presence there must have been about Isabella, in a few sentences to change so completely Lucio's way of speaking to her. He begins with loose, light words, but soon tells her he

cannot speak to her as to ordinary women. 'I hold you as a thing ensky'd and sainted'

"By your renouncement an immortal spirit
And to be talked with in sincerity
As with a saint."

But this brother is dearer to Isabella than anything else, and for his sake she endures all Lucio's coarse words, and promises, even though she doubts her own powers, to try what effect she can produce on Angelo. She is introduced to Angelo with the words:

"A very virtuous maid
And to be shortly of a sisterhood."

And in

"her youth
There was a prone and speechless dialect."

Her pleading with Angelo is all strictly true to her character. With few words, but with the intensity of meaning which only those uttered in the crisis of life ever gain, she puts her cause before the deputy:

"I have a brother is condemned to die;
I do beseech you, let it be his fault,
And not my brother."

And when Angelo interrupts her by saying there is no chance of reprieve, with true woman's wit she pretends to agree with him:

"O just but severe law!
I *had* a brother, then. Heaven keep your honour."

Only once does she lose her self-possession, the

prepared strength she has brought with her. Angelo has said :

“Your brother is a forfeit of the law
And you but waste your words.”

She has answered with the argument which is highest with her, though she is dubious of its effect on him.

“Alas ! alas !

Why all the souls that were were forfeit once
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be
If he which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are. O, think on that ;
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made.”

Angelo feels his strength wavering

“Be you content, fair maid,”

but adds vehemently, as if to put relenting beyond his own control,

“He must die to-morrow.”

Then for a moment, Isabella loses the thread of her speech. She gives way with a bitter cry of pain and passionate words :

“To-morrow ! O, that’s sudden. Spare him, spare him,
He’s not prepared for death,”

But she recovers herself almost immediately. She is tense and nerved to the utmost ; she must keep back everything that could mar her pleading. Angelo is wavering, she redoubles her efforts, he has said,

"Be satisfied.

Your brother dies to-morrow. Be content."

She detects the eager wish to console her, and now she tries irony. She shrinks from the tone of familiar comfort, and protects herself by scathing words, 'A pelting petty officer, using the heaven only for thundering.'

Then one more plea for Claudio—poor weak Claudio, whom she loves :

"We cannot weigh our brother with ourself."

And so by degrees she wins. The relenting comes, and she is to return next day. She leaves Angelo, promising to pray for him. Surely those words might have kept her 'enskyed and sainted' in his heart. But no! Though he has never loved before

"This virtuous maid subdues him quite."

He must see her again and 'feast upon her eyes.'

In the next scene, her greatness rises to sublimity. As the evil temptation is put before her, she seems to become less woman than spirit.

"Better it were a brother died at once
Than that a sister by redeeming him
Should die for ever."

It was no lack of love, only a belief in the unseen which ruled her. Angelo declares his full determination and leaves her, and she, poor, faithful, trusting woman, carries off her one strong hope, belief in Claudio, to the prison.

And now she has braced herself for the interview with Claudio, she has to make him strong to meet death ; she must be strong herself.

“What ho ! Peace here, grace and good company.”
Had any words so brave and sweet passed her lips before as those in which she broke the news to him ?

Claudio. “Now sister, what's the comfort ?”

Isabel. “Why,
As all comforts are, most good indeed,
Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,
Intends you for his swift ambassador,
Where you shall be an everlasting leiger.”

But this is as far as her strongest effort will carry her. She can give no good advice. She can only go on with feverish haste and thrilling words to make him know the rest.

“Darest thou die ?

The sence of death is most in apprehension.”

Then when he almost peevishly asserts his power of meeting his fate, she nobly comforts and praises him.

“There spake my brother, there my father's grave
Did utter forth a voice : yes, thou must die ;
Thou art too noble to conserve a life
In base appliances.”

Her very fervour carries him away and gives him a momentary strength, a lifting hand out of his selfishness and makes him cry,

“Thou shalt not do it.”

wringing from her the wailing answe

“O, were it but my life
I'd throw it down for your deliverance
As frankly as a pin.”

Then Claudio begins to waver, to weigh the sin, at last to put his whole pitiful soul into her name, ‘O Isabel.’ But she will strengthen him even now. One word will do it.

“What says *my brother*?”

Claud. “Death is a fearful thing.”

Isa. “*And shamed life a hateful.*”

The whole righteous woman's soul leaped up in those short words. What was ‘fear?’ She did not know what it meant.

“Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful.”

But ‘the shamed life?’ The life that would be abhorrent to goodness. Never. Not even the piteous appeal from the one she loved best,

“Ay : but to die and go we know not where”

could move her. She could trust her Claudio to God : she could not trust herself to sin. Only for his blindness, for his sadness, for his unbelief, for his bright young life that must be laid down, for his abject fear of the unknown which was dark to him, though bright to her, she cries,

“Alas ! alas !”

Then came the tempter, drawing nearer as a serpent.

“Sweet sister, let me live.”

And Isabella starts as if stung : the one human being

whom she loved and trusted in had failed her : all life seems blotted out for her ; only heaven remains. That wild cry was not against Claudio, the Claudio she had played with, had loved, had believed in, would have died for ; it was against the sin which has come so close.

“O you beast !

O faithless coward ! O dishonest wretch !

Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice ?

Take my defiance.

Die, perish.

’Tis best that thou diest quickly.”

The plot that follows in the story by means of which Angelo is brought to justice and Claudio is rescued, does not accord with our modern ideas. We wonder how Isabella could lend herself to it, but we must recollect the difference between the coarse turbulence and sensuality of that day and our own more cultured times. When a holy monk suggested the plan, Isabel, the obedient daughter of the Church, could see no harm in it.

“I have spirit to do

Anything that appears not foul

In the truth of my spirit.”

The love for Claudio has re-asserted itself. She will do anything except sin against her soul to save him. Her despair when she believes Claudio dead, her cries to the Duke for vengeance on Angelo, show plainly enough her human side. How terribly pathetic is the assertion uttered out of her sorrow,

"Truth is truth
To the end of the reckoning."

and her appeal to the Duke from the one thought and hope that helped *her*,

"As thou believest
There is another comfort than this world."

She, poor soul, who had only *comfort* now to look for, comfort which she sought in ministering to a woman lonely and forsaken as herself. Yes ; here is the change that is wrought, here is the moral growth. The Isabella that befriends Mariana is a nobler and a higher woman than she who first came out of the convent to plead for Claudio. From her own suffering she has risen into the higher life, which finds its only good in doing good, its perfect joy in others' joy. Is there any nobler touch in the drama than that which answers to Mariana's pleading that Isabel will kneel by her to ask for mercy for Angelo. The Duke says,

"Her brother's ghost would break his paved bed
And take her away in horror"

if she asked for the life of his murderer, but Mariana is a desperate woman, and she has tested Isabel's character ; she knows its sympathy, its unselfishness.

"Isabel,
Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me,
Hold up your hands, say nothing ; I'll speak all."

Surely the Duke is testing this woman's heart to the uttermost when he says,

"He dies for Claudio's death"

And *yet* Isabel kneels by Mariana

"Most bounteous sir,

Look, if it please you on this man condemned

As if my brother lived : I partly think

A due sincerity governed his deeds

Till he did look on me : since it is so,

Let him not die," &c.

They are the last words Shakspeare makes her speak : he leaves her with a divine light shining on her face. The joy which follows in Claudio being given back to her, and the love of the heart which had understood her even at the bitterest moment of her life is too sacred for words.

And which of George Eliot's women shall we call to stand by Isabella's side? Though their stories differ so widely, let us seek her in the old Italian library, with the sunlight falling on her golden hair, and her sweet voice reading from the Latin book to her blind father. In the world of fiction we shall find no purer and no grander spirit than that of Romola.

The story of Romola is wholly one of progression. It is the life history of a soul. The description of her when Tito first enters her presence is not unlike our ideal of Isabella when Lucio finds her in the convent. 'She 'was standing by her father at her full height, in quiet 'majestic self-possession, and the most penetrating 'observer would hardly have divined that this proud, 'pale face at the slightest touch on the fibres of affection 'or pity would become passionate with tenderness, or

‘that this woman who imposed a certain awe on those who approached her, was in a state of girlish simplicity and ignorance concerning the world outside her father’s books.’ In another place we read, ‘It was hardly possible to think of her beauty as anything but the necessary consequence of her noble nature.’ The words of the Duke about Isabella recur to us, ‘The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good, and grace being the soul of your complexion shall keep the body of it ever fair.’

And the contrast from the beginning between Romola and Tito is as marked as that between Isabella and the men around her. Romola is devoted to her father; Tito deserts his. Tito dislikes all sorrow and suffering; Romola lives in an atmosphere of both. How touching is the way in which Romola confides in Tito as he meets her going to visit her cast-off brother, when she, not knowing how her words sting him, ‘and interpreting all things largely like a mind pre-possessed with high beliefs,’ fancies that he sympathises with her. At the death-bed of her brother, at the vision of herself told by his dying lips, at the voice of Savonarola, Romola’s spiritual consciousness becomes quickened. Good, pure, unselfish, she had been before, but now the unseen life takes a deeper hold upon her: ‘the vision of death had altered the daylight for her for evermore,’ but it was that the perfect day, the light of self-renunciation might dawn. ‘It was a sudden opening into a world apart from that of her life-long

'knowledge.' The Romola who met Tito on the Loggia was in some respects a different woman from her who had parted from him near the chapter-house. She had lived in the last few hours more than Tito had ever lived or ever would live in this world. She was far beyond him already on the road which they purposed to tread together. It was no wonder if, in spite of her deep love (love which the sight of death had deepened in intensity, as it had done every other feeling) she was absent in mind. She had already begun, though she did not know it, to *look back* at Tito. In her heart there was 'a questioning need,' and in his there was no response. 'She was very thirsty for a deep draught of joy, but it seemed to her as if there would always be pale, sad faces among the flowers and eyes that look in vain.'

In Isabella, the trust of a life-time was killed with one sudden blow, but in Romola, the same revulsion is produced by slow torture, and we follow the cruel process in every stage. It begins with self-mistrust. Why is not her married life happier? Why should Tito be so ready to leave her for outside attractions? And then Romola hears Savonarola preach in the Duomo, and it wakes in her a consciousness which she has never had before. There is a life beyond the life of her immediate emotions: there is a universal life surging round her in which she has part. Hitherto love of Tito has been her strongest and deepest feeling: now something deeper and stronger, but as yet undefinable has

moved her. Its immediate result is only to make her more anxious to strengthen the cords of that love about her heart. 'She felt equal to any self-infliction that would save her from ceasing to love.' But the new emotion was not long in taking form and definiteness of its own, out of the death of her love. Tito surreptitiously parts with her dead father's library, the solemn bequest to her to be devoted to the good of the city; it was the sacred charge of her life. As the glib fluent words in which her husband breaks his treachery to her fall on her ear, Romola's individual and separate life dies. In a weaker woman all that was good might have died too, in the agony of that disappointed trust, but henceforth Romola is dead for herself, is dead for Tito, but she will rise again for humanity. 'You talk of substantial good, Tito. Are faithfulness and love and sweet grateful memories no good? Is it no good that we should keep our silent promises, on which others build because they believe in our love and truth? Or is it good that we should harden our hearts against all the wants and hopes of those who have depended on us? What good can belong to men who have such souls? To talk cleverly perhaps and find soft couches for themselves and live and die with their base selves as their best companions.'

It is Isabella's bitter wounded cry again, a cry as of one in bodily pain, which comes from Romola's lips as she says to Tito, 'You are a treacherous man,' with something grating in her voice as she looks down at him.

The agony of the time that follows is a baptism of pain which only a nature such as Romola's could feel. Few hearts would have pressed through that narrow way, which was all that opened before her as she watched from the Loggia 'the last remains of her father's hopes and work carried away to an unmarked grave.' When the clash of the city's joy came to her heart where all such joy was dead,

'She could never join hands with gladness again, but 'only with those whom it was in the hard nature of 'gladness to forget. Romola had lost her belief in the 'happiness she had once thirsted for; it was a hateful, 'smiling, soft-handed thing with a narrow selfish heart.'

Even her self-controlled spirit leaped up in wild rebellion to her fate. Joy was dead: why should she stay by its grave; she would go away; she would hide herself; she would not remain to have her old hopes mocked by the constant and degrading presence of Tito. 'Her life could not be happy any more, but it must 'not, could not be ignoble.' And she wrote to him, 'My love for you is dead,' and went out in the gray dawn to face the world alone. She had not yet learned that while her heart was overcharged with sorrow for herself, she would always be alone. Sorrow as well as joy had to be laid down, both hands emptied of all that they had clasped, that both hands might be free for lifting the heavy burdens of that vast family of brothers and sisters who would never let her be lonely again. And then as she rests under the cypress tree

outside the walls of Florence, Savonarola comes to her, speaks to her, and looks into her face with that wondrous gaze in which 'simple human fellowship expressed 'itself as a strongly felt bond.' She is to go back, he tells her; she is not to fly from her sorrow; and pointing to the crucifix which her dead brother had given her, he seals his words, 'There, my daughter, is the 'image of Supreme offering made by Supreme Love, 'because the need of man was great. . . The higher 'life begins for us, my daughter, when we renounce our 'own wills to bow before a divine law. . . You would 'leave your place in the city empty, when it ought to 'be filled with your pity and your labour. If there is 'a cry of anguish, you, my daughter, because you know 'the meaning of this cry, should be there to still it.' And in the strength of those words Romola laid down herself; she rose up and retraced her steps to her home. 'She was going to thread life by a new clue.' Through the grave and gate of death she had passed to her joyful resurrection. When we find her again, it is two years later, at the time of the pestilence, in the streets of Florence, when 'there was hardly a turn at which she 'was not greeted with looks of appeal or of friendliness.' She had ceased to think of happiness at all; the one end of her life seemed to her 'to be the diminishing of sorrow.' For a time, her fervent admiration of Savonarola, who had brought her light and strength, was a powerful influence in her life, but by degrees her larger soul passed his on the race: her nature was one

which developed evenly, a jewel cut with many sides, each of which caught and reflected the light. Savonarola's nature was developed in an intense but partial way. When Romola pleaded in vain with him to rescue her godfather Bernardo, the narrow fanaticism of the enthusiast could not comprehend the grandeur of the woman's soul to which in its earlier stages he had given a saving impulse. 'The cause of my party,' he says with flashing eyes, 'is the cause of God's kingdom.' 'I do not believe it,' said Romola, her whole frame shaken with passionate repugnance, 'God's kingdom is something wider, else let me stand outside it with the beings that I love.' Disappointed in Savonarola, deceived at every turn by Tito, and left alone by the death of Bernardo, she enters into one of those black spaces, the gloom of which is proportionate to the depth and height of the soul that suffers in them. 'Romola felt even the springs of her once active pity 'drying up and leaving her to barren egoistic complaining. Had not *she* had her sorrows too? And 'few had cared for her, while she had cared for many. 'She had done enough, she had done enough, she had 'striven after the impossible, and was weary of this stifling, 'crowded life.' She would fain leave it all. She will not court death, but perhaps death will be merciful and come to her. She leaves Florence, and eight days afterwards she stands on the shore of the Mediterranean, and the temptation to sail away on that blue sea comes over her. She buys the old fisherman's boat, and as night

comes on she drifts away into the darkness. The stars look down upon her with 'a hard light.' 'The sea and the sky were vast spaces where she was orphaned.' Which of us has forgotten how she was saved from despair, the cry of the little suffering child which called her back to life, the people dead and dying of the pestilence whom she tended, and who believed that the Madonna herself had come to their aid, as she moved about with the little brown motherless baby in her arms? And now she said, 'It was mere baseness in me 'to desire death. If everything else is doubtful, this 'suffering that I can help is certain; if the glory of 'the cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer. 'While the strength is in my arm, I will stretch it out 'to the fainting: while the light visits my eyes, they 'shall seek the forsaken.'

It was not necessary now that any priest should urge her to go back to her home. She had shaken herself free from all earthly support. She no longer needed a human hand to lift her up or to point to the highest. The eternal voice had spoken to her own heart, she was face to face with the Infinite. She had come

"Out of darkness, into light, through the shadows."

Again she went back to Florence to meet her life, to hear the news of her husband's death and of Savonarola's confession under torture. And she lived on to be near Savonarola in the hour of his death and to draw Tito's children into her childless arms.

TWO PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
WORDSWORTH SOCIETY.

I. ON THE SEEMING TRIVIALITY OF SOME OF
WORDSWORTH'S SUBJECTS.

It is undeniable that Wordsworth wrote unequally, and was oblivious of the relative proportions of things as we see them. It is undeniable that the sonnet which contains the exquisite line,

“A homeless sound of joy was in the sky,”

begins with

“Jones ! as from Calais southward you and I
Went pacing ”

and that the sublime thought of the teaching of city life

“To him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest ; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole,”

is followed by the words,

"This, of all acquisitions, first awaits
On sundry and most wholly different modes
Of education."

It is undeniable that there are many, who, while granting that Wordsworth is a great poet, scoff at, and resent the triviality of many of the subjects he has chosen. Those whom he has touched more deeply, and who owe him too much to care for cavilling, are confronted with such poems as the 'Idiot Boy,' 'Peter Bell,' 'Goody Blake,' 'The Waggoner,' and 'The Thorn,' and asked for their justification.

Mr. F. W. H. Myers, in his reverently appreciative criticism of the poet, says that "the sense of humour is apt to be the first grace which is lost under persecution ; and much of Wordsworth's heaviness and stiff exposition of commonplaces is to be traced to a feeling, which he could scarcely avoid, that 'all day long he had lifted up his voice to a perverse and gainsaying generation'" (p. 100).

The truest justification which those who love Wordsworth will plead for such poems is *the man himself*, and the breadth and depth of the work he had to do.

They will say that 'he gave them eyes, he gave them ears,' that he has taught them to see into

"The depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes ;"

that he has so illumined life that we know in our god-like hours

"What an empire we inherit
As natural beings in the strength of nature,"

and, slowly realising our Being, can cry

"Oh Heavens ! how awful is the height of souls."

Slowly too, if we have left ourselves to his influence we have begun to realise 'the mystery' 'in every face we meet,' and the nearness and kindred of our common humanity.

Therefore when Wordsworth writes of aged shepherds and huntsmen, and cottage children, of old women and deserted mothers, of beggar-boys and idiots, of waggoners and potters, of pet-lambs and green linnets, of wrens' and sparrows' nests, of daisies and celandines, and believes them worthy topics to interest humanity, those whom he has taught believe that they must be so, and trust to the light of his larger wisdom and deeper insight to show them how.

Dean Church in his essay on Wordsworth in Mr. Ward's 'English Poets' points out eloquently how much the poet's thought was influenced by the French Revolution ; and we can understand how this influence would appear almost defiantly in a choice of subjects. The simplest of human interests would have a claim upon him.

The Revolution itself was a movement which (though he felt its right direction and vast issues) was not wide

or deep enough to satisfy the prophet heart which saw
that man must learn

“To have freedom in himself,
For this alone is genuine liberty.”

When disappointed in action and immediate results, it
was to this larger aim that his heart turned for comfort,
to shew man the true grandeur of manhood, to teach
him how the discords of life are silenced, and

“The immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music.”

Henceforth it was nothing less than the freedom of
the universe which could content the Poet—it was man
in the simple elements of his Being that alone could
interest him. It is not the word *race* which he uses,
but the wider and yet more tender title of ‘the kind’—

“Housed in a dream at distance from the *kind*.”

Or again—

“To seek, in degradation of the *kind*,
Excuse and solace for her own defects;”

and he deliberately makes use of the same word in
speaking of the little wren—

“That to the *Kind* by special grace
Their instinct surely came?”

and the dog—

“A tender sympathy, which did thee bind
Not only to us Men, but to thy *Kind*,”

as though to emphasise the unity of Being which under-

lies all things, and of which man is slowly growing into consciousness.

To judge of Wordsworth's choice of subjects we must put ourselves at his standpoint. We cannot climb as he climbed ; we must stand on the mountain height beside him, and from thence see the proportions of the scene below.

And in proportion to the height gained will our ordinary limitations of small and great become less sharply defined. The crowd on the level plain may be engrossed with the action of individuals ; from the height they will be seen but as parts of a greater whole, if seen at all.

“ Who comes not hither ne'er shall know
How beautiful the world below.”

It is from some Kirkstone Pass that the poet looks at humanity, and he does not see the sneer which is on one man's face, or the calculating ambition on another ; but the widespread hope which the thought of man at his highest can bring, and the cultured spot that tells of man's presence in the vast prospect :

“ Lawns, houses, chattels, groves, and fields,
All that the fertile valley yields,”

are left below, their defining limits are absolutely lost—they are the playthings used in ‘life's uneasy game,’ fit only to

“ . . . keep the eyes awake
Of drowsy, dotard Time.”

From the height, he can see clearly how small such things become :—

“O care ! O guilt !—O vales and plains,
Here, 'mid his own unvexed domains,
A Genius dwells, that can subdue
At once all memory of You,—
Most potent when mists veil the sky,
Mists that distort and magnify ;
While the coarse rushes to the sweeping breeze
Sigh forth their ancient melodies !”

But the work of this genius of the heights is not ‘to destroy, but to fulfil.’ The inspiration of the closing lines of this mountain poem is full of divine insight—

“Hope, pointing to the cultured plain,
Carols like a shepherd-boy ;
And who is she ?—Can that be Joy !
Who, with a sunbeam for her guide,
Smoothly skims the meadows wide ;
While Faith, from yonder opening cloud,
To hill and vale proclaims aloud,
‘Whate’er the weak may dread, the wicked dare,
Thy lot, O Man, is good, thy portion fair !’”

Have we not here the outcome of that philosophic progress which has step by step climbed the height ; which has left behind it the noise of the world’s strife, and the exaggerated value of the world’s prizes—which has panted up the hill of duty, and which, turning to look at the scene below, finds it transfigured and proportioned—sees Hope and Joy unseen to the toilers in

the plain, and Faith in man's future, which the mists have obscured, bringing a message of far-off unity to 'hill and vale?'

And it is surely in this spirit that the whole of Wordsworth's special message to humanity is to be taken. What is great? or what is small? Who can tell? Have any of us yet been able to say what were the great events of our lives? When we have looked closely into them, have they not hinged on something so infinitely little that we have passed it by unheeded? It is not without cause that our Poet writes of the Wanderer on the mountains finding that—

“*There* littleness was not ; the least of things
Seemed infinite.”

The same thought comes in a curiously mystic passage of the prophet Ezekiel :—

“Upon *the top of the mountain* the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy.”—c. xliii. v. 12.

Wordsworth, whose outlook was so much vaster than that of ordinary men, lost our limitations of ‘small’ and ‘great’—of importance and unimportance, early in his career, and this perhaps tended to put him out of sympathy with a large number of ‘the Kind’ who are wholly absorbed in estimating the ‘small’ and ‘great’ of circumstance.

He aimed at shewing that man and nature were both revelations of a vaster whole in which they become one, and therefore it cannot be wondered at that in his

thoughts of the far-off issues of man's destiny—his anxiety to reveal man's close affinity with all nature—circumstance was in his sight of importance only so far as it helped to throw light on that destiny or revealed that affinity. The carefully elaborated poem of 'Peter Bell' goes to prove this. The exquisite ærial flight described in the Prologue can in no other way be reconciled with the deliberately prosaic elements of the story. The prose of the world is forgotten as we mount with the poet in the little boat like the crescent moon :—

“Up goes my Boat among the stars
Through many a breathless field of light,
Through many a long blue field of ether,
Leaving ten thousand stars beneath her ;
Up goes my little Boat so bright.”

And yet when he has taken us far outside this little Earth of ours, when the secrets of the other planets are found out, it is merely to show us that our Earth is not in its true harmony while the note of Peter Bell's life is silent, or until he has learned 'that man's heart is a holy thing'—that it is by the individual submission of individual souls that the true Power is manifested—that the all is in all—'so build we up the Being that we are.'

And the much satirized 'Idiot Boy' has the same foundation of the humanities, however prosaic its elements may be. The woman perils the dearest thing she possesses—allows her benevolence to a lonely and sick neighbour to overcome her maternal instinct of

preservation, and sacrifices her boy to the needs of another ; but, having done so by yielding to an impulse, her heart misgives her, and when, in spite of all her charges, her boy does not return, the conflict is reopened, and her heart, torn between two contending passions, chooses the duty to her child. Failing to find him, she is driven to the verge of suicide, and then, with a curiously human recoil, begins to hope again, from confidence in the pony. Her joy is contrasted with her past grief when she finds her boy by the waterfall, unconscious of any danger, and the whole scene is made as real as language can make it by the description of the early chill and cold dawning light in which she turns homeward after her night of agony :

“By this the stars were almost gone,
The moon was setting on the hill,
So pale you scarcely looked at her ;
The little birds began to stir,
Though yet their tongues were still.”

Only two old women and an Idiot? Yes ; but also human devotion, human anguish driven almost to madness, and human joy at its highest, to say nothing of both human and the dumb animal sympathy with sorrow. We may not see the beauty of such things, because it needs a profounder insight and a deeper sympathy than we possess to reach it ; but such stories can wait until we have grown tender enough to see their tenderness, and wise enough to know their wisdom.

It may be urged, with justice, that according to this

view, nothing is commonplace—nothing is unworthy of a place in poetry. But surely poetry is the life around us seen from a height, and illumined with more than a common light. The ordinary mind is unable thus to rise or to illuminate what it finds, and its attempt is the ordinary failure. Wordsworth was not able always to do it, but we can safely maintain that the height he had attained and the [vision which he had won were so much vaster than that of most men, that there are very few of his poems we can dismiss as trivial from his point of view, or without careful consideration on ours.

For, if we have felt the thrill of a new delight as we have looked at the network of grey budding boughs against the spring's blue sky—if we have found out for ourselves the beauty of a wayside flower unheeded before, or heard for the first time with our soul's ears the song of a bird—if one human being has become to us more sacred, or we have begun, however feebly, to have a vision of something beyond commonplace in the lives which are daily lived around us ; and if any or all of these possessions have come to us from the teaching of a mind that was great enough to find them out and consecrate them, we may feel that for us Wordsworth's choice of subjects is justified.

II.—ON WORDSWORTH'S VIEW OF DEATH.

There is surprisingly little about Death in Words-

worth's poems, and what there is, for the most part, is treated with a calm which warrants us in believing that it appeared to him less of a crisis than it does to many of us.

It would be interesting to ascertain what induced and warranted this calm ; for that, in spite of philosophy, he knew the human shrinking from Death, and understood the great pathetic doubt which lies at the root of most of our lives, seems clear from several of his poems.

The Solitary of the 'Excursion,' in his hopelessness, thought only of his life as a particular current of the stream which, he hoped, would soon reach

"The unfathomable gulf where all is still."

He summoned fortitude to face the thought of annihilation :

"As the Hindoos draw
Their holy Ganges from a skiey fount,
Even so deduce the stream of human life
From seats of power divine ; and hope, or trust,
That our existence winds her stately course
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part
Of a living ocean : or, to sink engulfed,
Like Niger, in impenetrable sands
And utter darkness : *thought which may be faced,*
Though comfortless."

And again :

"Sleep,
Doth, in my estimate of good, appear
A better state than waking ; death than sleep :
Feelingly sweet is stillness after storm,
Though under covert of the wormy ground."

It may be urged that Wordsworth is not speaking in either of these passages in his proper person; that he told the doubts of the Solitary merely that he might go on to express the consolation of the Wanderer. But no man who had not realised such doubts could state them with such power; and the pathos of some of his elegies is quite as great and heartfelt. For instance, in the lines on Sir G. Beaumont:

“If things in our remembrance held so dear,
And thoughts and projects fondly cherished here,
To thy exalted nature only seem
Time’s vanities, light fragments of earth’s dream.”

This is sad enough, but not so sad as the words of his lament over the Ettrick Shepherd, which come with dreary force to us who, in this day, are mourning such men as Emerson, Darwin, Green, Rossetti and Longfellow:

“How fast has brother followed brother,
From sunshine to the sunless land!”

Even Byron’s ‘first dark day of nothingness’ is not more chill and blank than the words,—

“A power is passing from the earth
To breathless nature’s dark abyss.”

All this goes to show that it was not from want of imagination that Wordsworth could write of Death with calm, and wrote of it so little.

But then we turn to such triumphant utterances as that of the Wanderer:

"I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
 Are glorified ; or, if they sleep, shall wake
 From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
 Hope, below this, consists not with belief
 In mercy, carried infinite degree
 Beyond the tenderness of human hearts.
 Hope, below this, consists not with belief
 In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
 That finds no limit but her own pure will ;"

or the calmer thought in his own loss,—

"Not without hope we suffer and we mourn ;"

or the simple heaven-learned wisdom of the cottage
 child, who still trails enough of the clouds of glory
 about her to realise the strength of the bond which
 Death has tried to break, and holds to her feeling that
 'We are Seven ;' or the strange solemnity of the
 comfort given to the bereaved one in 'Laodamia : '—

"The invisible world with thee hath sympathised ;
 Be thy affections raised and solemnised : "

and then we feel that Wordsworth's faith transcended
 his fears. But no doubt his view, whenever he realised
 it at all, was that which he describes in the 'Excursion : '—

"Death and its two-fold aspect ! Wintry—one,
 Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out ;
 The other, which the ray divine has touched,
 Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring."

And we can never forget that through all his philosophy
 there ran a deep vein of orthodoxy—curiously deep in

such a profound and wide thinker, leading us almost to believe that his mind was capable of such a vast range that it was glad to rest itself by limitations. He revered, and was ready to adopt and use, accepted formularies and doctrines, while he seemed to pass beyond and above them all, in his own far-reaching inspiration. It has been truly said of him, 'by that consummate vision which is superior to all processes of reasoning, he reached the ultimate data of speculative philosophy and theology ;' and the calm with which his greatest utterances about Death are fraught, seems due neither wholly to orthodoxy or to philosophy, but to that same 'consummate vision.'

For was it not the law of Being rather than of Personality which engrossed Wordsworth? It was this 'greater which contained the less' that he felt it was his vocation to show mankind, and Death was to him an incident in the story of Being, just as he showed human life to be in the 'Ode on Immortality.'

He seems in that poem to prove life an interruption for some Divine purpose of unseen Being—God passing through humanity and becoming God again :

" Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence : "

We come 'from God, who *is* our home.'

True, we forget our home, as we pass for the most part unconsciously through our divinely ordered probation ; but in

“A season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be,
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,—
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

His calmest and most uplifting thoughts upon Death seem some of them embodied, with that noble simplicity which is his great characteristic, in the ‘Primrose of the Rock’—the flower that was

“A lasting link in Nature’s chain
 From highest heaven let down.”

And he gloried in finding the deepest teaching in such a simple thing, for that was the thought ever dearest to him. This flower did indeed bring to him—to the eye which had ‘kept watch over man’s mortality’—thoughts that lay ‘too deep for tears:’

“The flowers, still faithful to the stems,
 Their fellowship renew;
 The stems are faithful to the root,
 That worketh out of view;
 And to the rock the root adheres,
 In every fibre true.

“Close clings to earth the living rock,
 Though threatening still to fall;
 The earth is constant to her sphere;
 And God upholds them all:
*So blooms this lonely Plant, nor dreads
 Her annual funeral.”*

And then the poet deliberately carries his thought on to the destiny of man :

“ Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
 The reasoning Sons of Men,
 From one oblivious winter called
 Shall rise, and breathe again ;
And in eternal summer lose
Our threescore years and ten.”

This seems indeed to be one of ‘the heights the soul is competent to gain,’ if not to keep, and for a moment we catch sight of the ‘immortal sea which brought us hither.’ The poet does not seem here to insist on the continuity of personality. He would hardly have chosen a flower which is not the type of continuity for this. It is not the same primrose which is found the next spring, but it comes from the same root ; its being is the same, and the lesser thought of the individuality is *merged, not denied*, in the whole. We may lose our threescore years and ten, but we shall not feel the loss in eternal summer, and he gives back to the soul the limited thought of its own personality lifted up and made divine in the greater freedom of the Being which

“ . . . makes each soul a separate heaven,
 A court for Deity.”

There is the same calm grandeur in the words —

“ But when the great and good depart,
 What is it more than this ?

*“ That man, who is from God sent forth,
 Doth yet again to God return ;
 Such ebb and flow must ever be,
 Then wherefore should we mourn ? ”*

Is not this the thought which inspired the ‘Ode on Immortality?’—and as its music sweeps through our souls, do we not feel that Wordsworth has left us some clue on the subject of Death if he has made us feel as he did himself, that we are part of that which shall be all?—

*“ Death a shadow
 From the rock eternity : ”*

and that

*“ Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide ;
 The Form remains, the Function never dies ;
 While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
 We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
 The elements, must vanish ;—be it so !
 Enough, if something from our hands have power
 To live, and act, and serve the future hour ;
 And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
 Through love, through hope, and faith’s transcendent dower,
 We feel that we are greater than we know.”*

WHAT IS THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS?

WE ask no more of a romance than the story it brings us, and the wild beauty of the Flight of the Duchess may well content us. The dramatic power with which the old retainer who tells the story is made real to us raises him into a prominent place among the characters with which the poet has enriched us. 'You're my friend' begins the loyal-hearted old huntsman, and before the end of the story it is true of each one of us. And of the rest it is hard to decide which is the best portrait in the group where all are so living and true: the coarse conventional Duke, the sick, tall, yellow Duchess, the pure child-like heroine with her loving heart and 'passionate eyes,' or the gipsy-queen. The great wild country too with its red, drear plain, its smelting furnaces, and its far sea; the gipsies 'trooping or lonely,' with their curious knowledge of the arts belonging to the earth from which they seem to have sprung by magic: the dull life of the Castle contrasting with the freedom outside of it: all seem to heighten the fascination of the story. It is perfect as a romance, and yet when 'the sweet form has disappeared through

the postern' we look after it wistfully, and our hearts go back to the gipsy-queen and her mystical words, and we wonder if we know all about it. The depth and meaning, the earnestness and beauty of the gipsy's words seem out of proportion to the facts of the story, and without wishing to limit by attempted interpretation the infinite capacities of a great poem, we cannot help asking, Is this a Romance and nothing more? If 'cut deep down the middle' shall we not find something else in it?

It is dangerous ground to look for meanings where they are not supposed to be, many would say it is wholly inadmissible, but in the interpretation I am about to suggest, I would say, when we have enjoyed the story to the full, when the huntsman is our friend, when the Duke has gone forth in his sulkiness, and the gipsy and the little Duchess are out of sight, and yet the story lingers like music in our minds—we have a right to let it say what it will to us. It does not spoil a work of art that those who look at it should see more than the artist had designed that they should see. It must have been present to him whether consciously or unconsciously, or they could not see it. Neither is it necessary that works of genius should bear the same interpretation to all who study them. Premising therefore that I do not presume to think my theory of this wonderful story is necessarily conclusive, or that other and fuller meanings may not yet be found in it, I would offer this interpretation of the Flight of the Duchess.

Three different types of characters seem to be before us, but are we not all conscious sometimes of the three comprehended in one complicated and contradictory Whole which we call ourselves? The gross self which is the Duke, the better man in us 'whom the Duke spoke to,' and the soul whom we have helped 'to cast off his yoke too.' What we tell our friend is the story of our own life, with its diverse influences, its spirit-flights, and earth-bound nature. How we are swayed between our loyalty to the conventional self in us, and our longing for the freedom to which the soul aspires!

And how real the scenery of the poem appears to us then, the

"Great wild country"

with its vineyards, sheep-ranges, cattle-tracts, open chase and mountain

"Where, at a funeral pace,
Round about solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wider country,
That's one vast, red, drear, burnt-up plain."

the land of mines and furnaces which is bounded only by

"The salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
And the whole is our Duke's country."

What can be a more complete and subtle picture of

the dreariness, the far-stretching sadness of a self-absorbed life, 'one vast, red, drear, burnt-up plain,' bounded only by the great sea of the unknown?

In the Huntsman, born in the self-same hour with his lord, we have the simple human nature that may either rise with the Duchess or fall with the Duke. Unexpressed, largely unconscious, and uncomplicated, this part of us is swayed passingly by good impulses, and recoils from the gross elements which it sees in the lower self, but not with sufficient impulse to take an opposite course. Unable to gauge the strength of the spiritual influences with which it comes in contact, it worships bye-gone precedent and conventionality with a blind loyalty, though with a natural preference for freedom which is innate. Nothing could shake the Huntsman's belief that the old Duke had died of going to court, but even when he was dying,

"They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!"

He can see the evil of the grosser elements, he is quite ready to assert in the after time that

"The old one, many a year,
Is in hell."

He utterly despises the new Duke and yet he will stay to the death by him because,

"He is our Duke after all;"

but he has nothing but severity for the sick, tall, yellow Duchess, 'she being the daughter of God knows who.'

There is pathos as well as humour in the Huntsman's description of the Duke; and which of us can look honestly into the depths of ourselves without a grim sense of the ludicrous incongruities and shams to be found there? He urges that it was not wholly the Duke's own fault that he was 'the pertest little ape,' such an utter sham. He had been taken away from all freedom, from red Berold and the good Moldavian wine. In Paris they had put all his life in an unreal light to him. (What falser or more misleading glare can fall on our lives than that which conventional Society throws?) For ages Self has been idolized.

"I must see this fellow his sad life through."

But between the Huntsman and the Duchess there is more affinity: the spiritual perceptions which may be dim at first will grow keener, and in the far future he will

"Get safely out of the turmoil,
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady."

But this is not a possibility for the Duke. In his character there seems to be gathered all the baser stuff, the moral alloy which mars our being. In such a portrait the poet surely makes a noble protest against some of the dangers of our age. He deprecates the

tendency to slavish imitation of bygone times, whether they be pagan, mediæval or renescent. The Duke

“Revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out.”

The love of vulgar display, the glowing pretence, the artificial expedients, the contemptible shams to which the self resorts in a degenerate age, seem to be aimed at in the words,

“So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it.”

And there is a coarser and yet more repulsive side to this ‘middle-age manners adapter.’ In contact with the finer elements of being wherever the soul asserts itself, the Duke becomes tyrannical. Life being viewed by him from an untrue basis, he has neither wish nor capacity for understanding the voice of the soul,

“Admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.”

The lower self would reduce the spiritual life to its own conventional and convenient limits :

“The lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause.”

And human experience can bear witness only too

sadly to this contemptuous patronage which our lower nature feels towards the soul. Provoked by its interference, yet tolerating it for expediency, silently mocking at its praise or blame, chilling and thwarting its every effort, hardly acknowledging its existence, until suddenly moved by some horrible impulse, we demand of it sympathy in some base pursuit and desire to drag it down to ignoble uses.

“The Duke’s part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business?”

And what is the Flight of the Duchess?

Is it not the supreme moment when the soul shakes off the bondage of self and finds its true freedom in others.*

Mrs. Browning has put such a crisis grandly in the words,

“From my brain the soul wings budded, waved a flame about
my body
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out as
man
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow
ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits
can.”

* We cannot afford to let the much abused word “altruism.” go, until it has found an equivalent in the English language. “Otherness” is nonsense, and yet we can get no nearer to it than that. The recognition of our life in others as true ground on which to base the laws of moral conduct in the future, is what we need, and the poetry which shows altruism as the true liberty of the soul will have close affinity to the after-time which will have altruism as the law of life.

At first the little Duchess is so small that the Huntsman will have it she is just

“The smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of Nature's madness ;
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her.”

She is represented as spontaneous and like a child, for consciousness mostly comes by pain, and at first she is happy and trustful with her pretty questionings and thanks to her retainers. What significance there is in the words

“No bird flew past, but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover.”

She believes God meant her to be happy, and therefore she would be happy in spite of the frozen region she has entered. And then, as the icy crust thickens, as the poor little heart gets starved of its natural food and all that could make it live, she becomes ill and silent,

“Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin.”

What there was of her dwindles by lack of use, by contempt, by cruelty ; but when the coarse tyranny of the Duke grows aggressive, there is a sudden recoil. The loathsome participation in an artificial show is suggested to her, and she rejects it. The soul spurns the gross suggestions of the ignoble self, and self-love

repulsed grows more tyrannical. The Duke rides forth 'in a perfect sulkiness' alone to the chase, and meets at his gate the troop of gipsies—the Bohemian glass-blowers and potters—the magical wandering people, *true sons of the soil*. It is tempting to linger over the wonderful description of their art and themselves—

“Now in your land, gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.”

But there is one figure among them more remarkable than the rest, 'the oldest gipsy then above ground,' and the Duke puts into her hands the office of bringing the little lady at home to reason. He does not know that that which is repulsive to the lower self, may be life to the soul.

Hideous (*to the Duke*) with worn-out eyes and a level whine, the gipsy crone will surely strike terror into the rebellious heart on which his tyranny has had so little effect :—

“He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate,
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.”

And so he desires the Huntsman to take the crone to the presence of the little lady. But woe to Self if Love once touches the soul ! To the Duke's power of vision there could be nothing but what was hideous in the

crone, but the Huntsman has enough of the spiritual nature to recognise the beauty of the gipsy Deliverer, Love. (We most of us have a part which can recognise her beauty without having the strength to follow her into liberty.) For as he looked—

“She had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine, nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature;
And the change reached too, *whatever the change meant*,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak’s arrangement;
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges.”

How could the Duke see any of this? To the lower self, love of others is not beautiful, it is hideous both in its looks and demands, but to the waiting hungry soul, the free gipsy-saviour brings Life itself.

And then there follows one of the miracles of our common lives, when unconsciously at first, the soul suddenly receives some new and quickening impulse, and without being able to define its power, is aware of a presence that is drawing it away from the self with which it has in vain tried to be satisfied:

“And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it.

*

*

My ear was arrested
By—was it singing,—or was it saying,

Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?

*

*

*

In the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the gipsy-woman late,
With head and face down bent
On the lady's head and face intent."

And where the Duke had seen but eye-holes, eyes of
magnetic fire look out upon the Duchess,

"For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
—*Life's pure fire* received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving.

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I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened
As she listened and she listened."

And as he looks, the charm works on the Huntsman
oo; he gets a glimpse of that divinely musical message
which is calling the Duchess away from her trouble—

"And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furred
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world,
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand."

For even our simple human natures do see "heaven

opened" sometimes, and a soul vanishing from the clutch of the sorrow and despair which we thought must destroy it, into a boundless liberty which the greater part of our nature is unable to comprehend. When higher laws draw the spirit out of itself into the life of others, when grief has waked in it, not a self-centred despair, but a divine sympathy, when it looks from the narrow limits of its own suffering to the largeness of the world, and the sorrows it can lighten, we dimly apprehend that a soul has taken flight, and has found its freedom in a region where earth-bound natures cannot follow it. Thus the spirit gets

"A share

O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here."

Surely the message which the gipsy brought to the Duchess was this,—that if she would leave her own troubles, and throw herself into the life of others, she would be free. Her heart is starved; the gipsy shows how it can be fed by loving. Her life is constrained and circumscribed; the gipsy shows a boundless horizon in the joys and sorrows of others. The rapid mystic mark of fellowship with the world's suffering is to be found in

"Each eye's profound and glorious globe"

where fellow-sufferers will 'detect the kindred spark.' They will discover the heart that can feel for suffering in the tinge on 'the round young cheek' like 'costly scarlet wine.'

None can give true sympathy but those who have suffered and learnt to love ; therefore she must be proved

“Fit, when my people ope the breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test,
Which adds one child more to the rest—
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure.”

And so passing from the bondage she has endured, she will still have trials, but they can never be the same again. The old pain will have no power to touch her, she will have learnt all that it could teach. The world will find what she has learnt from it and will be the richer for it.

“Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb—
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on the finder's heart ;
So trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last!
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore ;
And thou shalt know, these arms once curled

About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
 Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
 Or brain devise, or hand approve !
 Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into life and joy."

What her future fate will be, what hearts her heart in its self-renunciation shall yet have power to draw into blossom and fruit, what deep teaching there may yet be for her own life, the gipsy queen will not foretell ; the true powers of selfless love are not yet gauged, and the power of the *true* union of those that truly love has never been tried :—

" If any two creatures grew into one,
 They would do more than the world has done,
 Though each apart were never so weak,
 Yet vainly through the world should ye seek
 For the knowledge and the might
 Which in such union grew their right." *

Love at its highest is not yet known to us, but the passionate eyes of the Duchess speak for themselves that it will not be a life of quiescence now that she has begun to see what Love means, she will never be alone again. Giving herself out freely for the good of all, she is no longer isolated—

" *We* are beside thee in all thy ways"—

* Valence and Colombe would probably come near to it.

the great world's company of those who need her, the gipsy band of all human claims,

“Whether it is thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street ;”

to help in the throng by loving deeds and tender compassion, or to give sympathy out of depths of loneliness, as she steps

“Alone through the morass.”

So she passes on to old age, rich in hoarded memories, seeing the Past as entire,

“And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul.”

Death to such a life is but ‘the hand which ends a dream.’ What was to come next, not even the gipsy seer might say,

“Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh, and the soul awakes
Then—”

Ay, then indeed something would happen !
But what ? For here her voice changed like a bird's,
There grew more of the music and less of the words.

And we can trustingly leave the mystery of Death in the music of Love.

The huntsman wakes as from a spell. By the very intensity of the moment he becomes unable to follow the spiritual aspirations any further. He was not ready

for the Flight, but the Duchess was. Here was Freedom, Deliverance, Life at last.

“The door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess : I stopped as if struck by palsy,
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best.”

But the huntsman is only capable of an impulsive glimpse of the beauty of the selfless life. The gipsy crone's beauty fades away as fast as it came to his eyes—

“I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits.”

The whole nature is only capable of coming by slow degrees to the rule of perfect love, and its beauty is only revealed in flashes, but we become conscious of a touch which the soul has felt, that reveals in it a kindred beauty we can recognise, and we know that it is never again subdued by the self. Some day we shall come out of the bondage wholly ; the Duke will die ; we shall get safely out of the turmoil, and

“Arrive at last at the land of the gipsies
And find my lady.”

But even from the amount of impulse he has received, the huntsman is capable of helping the Duchess to cast off the yoke ; he even offers her his own horse, his most cherished possession of ‘red Berold's begetting,’ to make good her escape ! It is a crisis of emotion as deep as he

is capable of conceiving ; and the Duchess understands it, and leaves him the little plait of hair, (part of herself.) For evermore from this supreme moment the soul's reign in him is certain ; a life so touched can never be absolutely poor again ; some day he will follow ; but now there is nothing for him to do but to see her mount her palfrey and take flight with the gipsy :

“ I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
The palfrey bounded,—and so *we lost her*,”

‘ *We lost her* ’ surely says plainly that there is a large part of our nature which is unable at once to follow the flight of the highest part of us, or to understand the path of Love, but which knows that Love is guiding the soul and will lead it right, though we can no longer see the working and inner life that was revealed to us momentarily. The Duke and the sick, tall, yellow Duchess will never be able to follow or to find her who has flown, but the true nature which loves much, which finds out first ‘ what a thing friendship is, world without end,’ and that ‘ age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease,’ will turn from where

“ In the churchyard Jacynth reposes’
And our children all went the way of the roses,”

and yet find the little Lady in the land of unity and rest.

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY.

To write of this wonderful little drama seems unnecessary. It is so direct and obvious it needs no comment, and therefore it is not about the story itself as a story that I wish to offer any remark, but it seems to illustrate one side of Browning's thought in a very remarkable way and of that I may be allowed to speak.

We have here no violent incident (as in *Pippa Passes*—the *Blot on the Scutcheon*, or even in reflective *Sordello*,) no detailed history of a soul's conflict as in *Paracelsus*, no sophistry as in *Bishop Blougram*, no evolution of thought as in *Saul* or *Cleon*.

We have the simple story of one day, the extent of action in it is confined to the giving and receiving of a letter. The dramatis personæ are a band of courtiers, a waiting-maid, an advocate dusty with hard riding, a prince and a lady. What then is it that holds us enthralled in the story? Simply this, that it is the life of a soul that hangs in the balance: that the arena is moved from the outer to the inward:—that the soul goes through hair-breadth adventures, seems sometimes

in jeopardy altogether, and is triumphant in the end. The whole drama is one of the spirit, and not of the body. The clue to it lies, I think, in the broken exclamation of Valence '*when man perceives.*' The story is one of the growth of a true power of seeing, a power which shall correct the imperfect and distorted views of life which we have by nature.

In Berthold the prince, we have the apotheosis of success. The description of his career as given by Valence is that of success sublimated, so lofty, so free from meanness, so refined, that I have heard it quoted as Browning's ideal of manhood. And it needs to have the character of Valence placed beside it, before we can see what Browning's ideal of manhood really is—so subtly hidden is the blame, even the scorn with which he depicts that which the world calls greatest. The world's success is the

"Circle premature

Heedless of far gain"

or

"The hundred that's soon hit."

of the Grammarian's Funeral. The same note is struck in this passage though with a touch more irony.

"He gathers earth's whole good into his arms,
 Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,
 Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
 One great aim, like a guiding star, above—
 Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
 His manhood to the height that takes the prize ;
 A prize not near—lest overlooking earth

He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content :
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophecies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave."

There is a glamour in the ring of these words which carries us away. Nothing is more wonderful in his poems than the way in which Browning wields language for making impressions. He manipulates words exactly as an artist does colours. The high sounding flow of these words deceives the ear for a moment just as the gifts of fortune of which he is speaking do. Then when we come to examine we find how we have been taken in with the shimmering grows shine and the rest of it.

Man is led at his grandest *to the grave!* though it cannot be denied he has won beautiful gifts of wisdom, stateliness and strength, which all the world admire, and their due completion will suffice this life. He springs through the night (we mark the significance of that metaphor of *night*) towards the star of success, his educated faculties enjoying step by step of his upward career. *This, for his own good.* Mankind seeing him successful credit him with every gift of God and man, endow him in imagination with every virtue he does not possess, while he, free from all such encumbrance does the rest! So every day's success adds to *what is he*, a solid strength, an æry might to what encircles him,

that is, makes the unreal fiction which men have elected to worship more firmly seated in their admiration. Until when Emperor his very shadow shall be so watched, his very dress so noted, that nothing by exclusiveness shall seem possible for him 'their typified invincibility.'

"Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends—
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!"

Thus the supremest of exclusiveness is *his* going on: *his* greatening: he is the *man* of *men*, not the man of God nor ever can be! the man whom men commend for no virtue but success, the spirit of all flesh, the sublimation of all that is lowest, the self-centre,—the convergence of all self-directed effort, the fiery centre of an earthly world. What a picture of narrowing, of dwindling and of ultimate loss. We may compare with this the words of the Grammarian's Funeral,

"That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies e'er he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find Him.

And yet there is something pathetic in this successful man too. This man who believes in no love save the love of power, had learnt his lesson in one brief, wild flash of light in the old time when he was still struggling in the mire and Priscilla left him for a Brabant lord. It is not surprising that he turns 'to plod on the old way, and somewhat wearily,' he must confess.

And in sharp contrast to the coming Emperor stands the nameless advocate, the man whose true vision has come, the man who, as Keats says, in the first version of *Hyperion* 'has had purged off, his mind's film,' to whom the miseries of the world are misery and will not let him rest, who has learnt a real estimate of things, who will never take Earth for Heaven, or false for true. And this is the thought of the poem. True sight is the truest gift of life, the best that it has to teach us. Berthold's was false sight. Colombe was still purblind, Valence *saw*. '*When man perceives*' heaven is found. Valence was no philanthropist for the praise or even for the love it could bring him : he only saw that the true life of one is the life of all, and that the rest is death and nothing less. This comes out again and again in his words. He tells Colombe that such men as her courtiers have hidden a source of *true* dominion from her,

"The lowest, on true grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on false :
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds !"

Not even Colombe shall draw him aside from the people's wrongs.

"My life continues yours, and your life mine."

Teach me,—every haggard face,—
To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue. Help me Cleves!"

Then in his grief at the thought of Colombe choosing Berthold, it is for her he grieves most,

"—But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,

(No far future, but the present open vision)

Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
This spurning love and kneeling to the world."

And again in his words at the end, his outburst of love, the highest description of it, I think, which any poet of our own day has reached.

"He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!"—

(His mind touching the furthest limit of self-abnegation in the sharp agony of that last word.)

And lastly, in that boon which he may claim, the whole self is laid aside, no flower, no touch of the hand he should see no more, but one supreme thought for the many who suffer.

"Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!"

In such a light, how all small thoughts dwindle and fade. Such men are god-sent. They come to us now and then, laying a hand on our eyes for a moment, unseen of those around, but so purging our sight, that we know the Healer of the blind has been with us, and the spirit cries 'I know not from whence he is: this I know, that whereas I was blind now I see.'

This was the friend of Colombe, the man who could teach her to take love at its highest worth, who showed her that love is most when it

"Inclines the heart to the world's good."

No mere selfishness disguised, but good as a means to the great good, the good of all: this is the appeal which his soul makes to hers, leading it up new-born on that birthday into a new world.

In *Colombe*, we have a story of growth such as Shakespeare delighted to draw, a mind beautiful in itself, but inoperative from limitation, suddenly touched by a master-mind and driven by a crisis to quick and surprisingly beautiful development.

In passing, we may note that all the events transpire in one day as in *Pippa Passes* (the drama in which is shown how many crises in different lives may be touched and influenced by one day of a simple human life and the song of a little factory girl). I think this is deliberate art in the work of the poet, for surely he means to show that time and space have no concern with what belongs to the spirit, that of every spirit it is

true 'one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'

Colombe wakes up first to suffering as most must do who would truly learn to live, and she then sees that her suffering is not irremediable, because it is suffering which is based on want of sight. Her Duchy had been much to her, but chiefly for the sake of what it gave her, the love of courtiers which turns readily to the new lord: in losing this she really loses nothing, only she must learn to perceive this. If Berthold really loved her, there might be some reason for marrying him, when she might stay and right the wrongs she had learned: but this was only half-sight, 'seeing men as trees walking,' and she is led up to the clear open-eyed vision in which she sees a new life, where the rest has been a dream.

"I take him—give up Juliers and the world.

This is my birthday."

It is not the people of Cleves who will lose by that marriage, and even in passing from the false natures with which she has been surrounded, we see how she touched Prince Berthold. 'A somewhat wearier life remains' for him than he 'thought possible,' and Guibert starts from the throng to follow his lady, vowing it is his Birthday too.

On the whole then we may venture to say that this poem is one of Browning's most valuable contributions to that which will inevitably come to be part of the

ruling belief of the future—viz., that life, lived in and for others, is alone worthy of the name of life.

As a writer of our own time has said with a prophet's voice, 'All our perplexity comes from making our consciousness the measure of the fact, instead of recognising *it* as the measure only of the phenomena from which the fact is to be learnt. Assuming that which is constantly present to our perception to be that which *is*, we can comprehend nothing. Intellectually the world is a mystery to us; morally, a fearful problem. Am I wrong in saying that there is a remedy for this state of things in remembering that man's deficiency modifies his impressions and convictions and in endeavouring to ascertain in what respects the very fact that *is* must exceed what *is* to his consciousness. That is technically to find out and exclude the negative element in his perception by taking it into himself. If we will do that, the clouds roll back, the darkness turns to light. Nothing is altered, but we understand.

Our daily work remains the same as before; but it is done with a new spirit. We direct our aim to the reality, using the phenomena with reference to that, treating them not falsely, as for or by themselves, but truly as they are in relation to a different fact which alone causes them to be perceived. We live for man's redemption. We see that the raising man to true and worthy life is the secret of human experience, the sacred mystery of nature. Once convinced that the

Eternal is the only true existence, our slavery is at an end.'—(*James Hinton.*)

And as a dead singer has said,

“ We carry the Heavens with us, dear,
While the earth slips from our feet.”

GOBLIN MARKET.

THERE is a poem of Christina Rossetti's which it is worth while often to recall to our minds, not only for its quaint beauty, but for the wide and deep wisdom which it holds. I mean the poem called "Goblin Market," from which her first published volume of verses takes its name. It is a little allegory lightly and gracefully told in flowing musical verse, with picturesque detail and tender feeling, but with an underlying depth and purpose that is worth careful thought. The story is briefly this :—

Morning and evening
 Maids heard the goblins cry,
 "Come buy our orchard fruits,
 Come buy! Come buy!"

Wonderful luscious fruits they were, with which, day
 by day, they tempted the two sisters, Laura and Lizzie.

Evening by evening
 Among the brookside rushes
 Laura bowed her head to hear,
 Lizzie veiled her blushes.

Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautious lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head ;
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits.
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry, thirsty roots ?"
"Come buy," call the goblins,
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh, cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look.
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook,
"Look, Lizzie ; look, Lizzie !"
Down the glen tramp little men ;
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One hugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
"How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious,
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes !"
"No !" said Lizzie, "No ! No ! No
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."

She thrust a dimpled finger
 In each ear, shut eyes and ran.
 Curious Laura chose to linger,
 Wondering at each merchant man.
 One had a cat's face,
 One whisked a tail,
 One tramped at a rat's pace,
 One crawled like a snail,
 One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
 One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry;
 She heard a voice like voice of doves
 Cooing all together,
 They sounded kind and full of loves
 In the pleasant weather.

.
 Laura stretched her gleaming neck
 Like a rush-imbedded swan,
 Like a lily from the beck,
 Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

And Laura yields, draws near and listens to the luring
 voices, is told to taste the glowing fruit, and laments to
 the goblin men that she has no money. But this does
 not matter to them; it is not gold that the evil ones
 want, but to gain power over her, and they merely
 answer that she has gold enough upon her head—'Buy
 from us with a golden curl,'—she must give them part
 of herself to content them. There is a momentary
 remorse, 'She dropped a tear more rare than pearl'—

then temptation overcomes her, the curl is cut, and the fruit globes pressed to her mouth in greedy haste, so sweet, so luscious, so apparently satisfying, surely the best thing she ever had, or ever could taste.

She sucked until her lips were sore,
Then flung the emptied rinds away,
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

The glamour and bewilderment have laid hold of her senses, and she runs back to her home dreaming. Lizzie meets her full of 'wise upbraidings'—she ought not to have stayed so late, does she not remember Jeanie, their friend, who had taken gifts from the goblin men—eaten their fruits, and plucked their flowers, but then pined and pined away, sought for the fruits, yet could never find them, and so, 'she dwindled and grew grey,' and fell with the first snow, and even the grass and daisies refuse to grow on that sad grave. But when Laura, reckless of all advice, pours out a rapturous description of her pleasure, and says she must have more fruits, and will bring them to Lizzie—words seem useless, and Lizzie loves too well and wisely to waste them.

A pretty description follows—first, of the sleep of the sisters, 'golden head by golden head;'—then of the duties of the day, fetching the honey, milking the cow, kneading cakes, churning butter, whipping cream,

feeding poultry, and sewing. Lizzie, blithe and gay, Laura, sad and absent, Lizzie finding interest and pleasure in her simple duties, looking on all true service as true happiness, and for the mere bright days' delight, innocently strong and content. Laura is 'longing for the night,' the simple duties of the day pall upon her. She is sick of all that is not exciting, flattering, and sweet, like the cries of the goblin men, and the taste of the goblin fruit. Life seems vain until she can taste those delights again. 'Slow evening' comes, and the sisters go with their pitchers to the reedy brook, Lizzie, placid, Laura, like a leaping flame. Lizzie, plucking the gold and purple water-flag, and turning homeward directly her work was done; Laura, lingering and listening for the cry which comes no more to her, 'come buy! come buy!' Her watching and listening are all in vain, no sound or sign comes to her again, but Lizzie hears the goblins, for they have not conquered Lizzie, and Laura turns cold as stone, when she knows that Lizzie can hear the longed-for cry, and that she herself has grown deaf to it.

Her tree of life drooped from the root,

She said not one word in her heart's sore ache.

Through the long nights by Lizzie's side she tossed in her restless anguish, and sat up in a passionate yearning,

And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break,

But the glamour was over, the dream gone by for ever,
and the awakening was all that was to come. Through
long days and nights Laura kept watch in vain

In sullen silence of exceeding pain.

She never heard the luring cry again. She too began
to 'dwindle and grow grey.' One day she remembered
her kernel-stone, and set it in the ground with the wild
hope of having fruit for herself, but it never grew, and
so the last hope died out, and with it died out Laura's
efforts in life. She 'no more swept the house,' or
fetched the honey, or brought water from the brook;
all interest was over, she sat in the chimney corner
listless and weary, and would not eat.

Then the great pity which cannot rest until it has
made effort for the deliverance of its object, woke in
Lizzie's heart. She thought of dead Jeanie, and felt
that something must be done to save her Laura, who
seemed to be knocking at death's door. She weighs
no more, sees but one fact directly, that at any sacrifice
except that of right, Laura must be helped. So she put
a silver penny in her purse,

Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight ; halted by the brook,
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and to look.

What a wonderful picture Christina Rossetti has created
here, of the young girl with the selfless purpose, and the
speed impelling love glowing in her pure young face.

If I were an artist, I would draw that Lizzie in the twilight, as she crosses 'the heath with clumps of furze.'

She has not long to wait when she reaches the brook. She has been long looked for: the goblins come to meet her, laughing with fiendish glee. She has come at last—they knew she would, so they

Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces.

And pressing round her they caressed her, and stretched up their dishes piled with fruit, as luscious and as tempting as they had given to Laura. But they did not know Lizzie. Holding out her silver penny, she asked for the fruit in a way altogether foreign to them. 'Nay! but eat with us,' they say 'it is nothing if you do not sit at the feast with us; let us see how you relish the fruit. You cannot carry such fruit away! The bloom would go off it. Stay and be our welcome guest.' 'Nay!' said Lizzie, 'one waits at home alone for me, if you will not sell me the fruit, give me back my silver penny.' Then their persuasions turn to fury—their tenderness to cruelty—they first give her evil words, then hustle and claw her, and shew themselves

the evil beasts they really are with their fierce wicked ways. They

Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands, and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

The description of Lizzie in this cruel crowd, and this bewildering pain, is perhaps the most beautiful part of the poem,

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in the flood,
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea
Sending up a golden fire,
Like a fruit-crowned orange tree,
White with blossoms, honey-sweet,
Sore beset by wasp and bee,
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire,
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

Nothing can move the simple-hearted girl whose whole mind is set on giving help to another. She utters not a word ; kicked, mocked at, cuffed, pinched black as ink, she will not open her lips lest the fruit should be crammed into her mouth.

At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along which ever way they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot ;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

Lizzie has done her work. She has proved that they are but goblins, that there is no reality either in their promises or themselves. She has done her best for Laura, and she hurries home. Going up the garden path she calls to Laura to come and kiss her.

For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men.

The thought of Lizzie's danger and of the darkness which might shadow her life in consequence, roused Laura from her own sorrow. Was Lizzie's lot to be dimmed as hers had been? Was she 'to be undone in her undoing?'

Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?

The thought is maddening to the weary-hearted girl. She clings to her sister, 'and kissed and kissed and kissed her,' while the long-frozen tears flow from her eyes. But as Laura's lips touch the juices which linger about Lizzie, she comes to a true knowledge of those

fruits. She knows now that they are goblin pleasures, not true ones: they turn to wormwood, and fever runs through her veins. The past appears in its true colours. She sees what Lizzie has done; the contrast between them overwhelms her, and she gives way under the long strain she has endured.

She fell at last;
Pleasure past, and anguish past,
Is it death, or is it life?

And what is the answer? What is the great meaning of the poem? What is Lizzie's guerdon for pain?

Life out of death.

Through the long night of anguish Lizzie watches by her sister. When the early reapers go to work, when the notes of the first birds are heard in the eaves, when the new buds are opening to the light,

Laura awoke as from a dream;
Laughed in the innocent old way;
Hugged Lizzie, but not twice or thrice,

and she is saved. Years after, when both Lizzie and Laura are wives, with children of their own, Laura calls the little ones and tells them the story of the haunted glen and the wicked fruit merchant goblins:

Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote.
Then, joining hands to little hands,

Would bid them cling together,
 For there is no friend like a sister
 In calm or stormy weather,
 To cheer one on the tedious way,
 To fetch one if one goes astray,
 To lift one if one totters down,
 To strengthen whilst one stands.

Such is the outline of the story, and the meaning is, perhaps, sufficiently obvious. Do we not all know them, these grisly goblin men, with their bewitching wares? All the pleasant things that tempt us from the plain *homeward* path of right, all the vanities and luring voices, and the things we wish were right because they seem so beautiful. Do we not also know, some of us, how when we have sucked that goblin fruit, we too

Knew not was it night or day
 As we turned home alone?

And then comes the slow and gradual knowledge that what we took for real was but goblin pleasure,—was but a fading fairy dream! Vainly we too may have watched for the luring voices, ‘Come buy! Come buy!’ a second time; once is enough for poisoning, and therefore we listen in vain, and the slow wearing remorse begins:

Her tree of life drooped *from the root*.
 She said not one word in her heart’s sore ache.

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She kept watch in vain,
 In sullen silence of exceeding pain;

She never caught again the goblin cry—

“Come buy! Come buy!”

She never spied the goblin men

Hawking their fruit along the glen.

And perhaps we too keep some thought of the old pleasant evil, and, like the kernel-stone, we set it and hope it will bear some of the pleasant fruit; but it never grows, though we moisten it with tears; and our daily life, as seen through that false glamour, becomes all uninteresting, and we grow listless. If our pleasure has been selfish, our suffering will be selfish too. It was for self that Laura grieved, it was for self she suffered.

But when we turn to Lizzie, we find no self; and therein lies her strength. It is her yearning love for her sister, which is ready to give up worldly possessions, and to suffer anguish for Laura's sake, but even that love will not swerve from the right. We sometimes ask, and wonder, what good can come out of temptation? When it seems to us as if we could not face the fierce battle again; when, worn out with the fight, we feel all strength and hope and joy have for the time died down, we are inclined to mourn for that lost strength and the joy and power which seem to have been wasted in the strife.

But what is so divine as the Power which uses even this suffering for the highest good, and that blesses others through our pain? For how can we have real help to give the tempted unless we ourselves know what

temptation means? If Lizzie had only stayed at home, and given good advice to Laura, she could never have redeemed her; it was because she *faced* the goblin men, because she would not taste their glowing wares even when pressed against her lips, because she fought her way in anguish through all that goblin crowd, and proved their unreality.

There was One 'who *suffered* being tempted and *therefore* is able to succour them that are tempted,' and this seems to be the exquisite meaning of the story. We go through the hard fight with sin, not so much for the perfecting of our own characters (though that is helped by it) as for the loving insight and sympathy which it gives us for helping others.

For there is no friend like a sister,

but then it must be a sister who knows what we have felt and suffered—one who has been in the depths herself, and

For our sake has braved the glen,
And had to do with goblin men.

And in a larger and wider sense, may not the thought of this poem help us with all our sisters in the world? It is not for those alone who are closely related to us by kin, nor even for our friends, we suffer; we have sisters on every side of us; sisters tempted everywhere by the goblin luring cry of the vain pleasures which deceive.

We may learn best by patient steadfastness in our own temptations how we can help them, standing

Like a lily in the flood,

or like the town

Close beleaguered by a fleet

Mad to tug our standard down.

May it not help us in keeping that standard high and pure, to think—I am not fighting for myself alone, nor even for those who belong to me, but that by having overcome, I may be able to understand, to sympathise with and to help those whom I do not know—my sisters throughout all the world? For the only glory won from suffering is the deeper knowledge which can give itself out in deeper help.

JEAN FRANCOIS MILLET.

"Don't you mark we're made so that we love,
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see,
 And so they are better painted ; better to us
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that,
 God uses us to help each other so
 Lending our minds out."—*Robert Browning.*

JEAN François Millet is but little known in England, and has only of late attained popularity in France, but the work he did, and the way in which he did it, remove him from all limits of nationality, and give him as a possession to the world. It is in the West that he has found his truest appreciation, and some of his best pictures are the property of Americans.

His biographer, Alfred Sensier (much of whose life was spent in a patient and loving interpretation of the works of his friend), says in his biography of Millet, "He is in our minds a great figure in art, a product in a fertile field, a new man with healthy ideas, a clear brain, a sure and powerful hand. He celebrated his own daily life, his race, his work, as a peasant. He

gave our school a fructifying thought, others than ourselves may develop more clearly its importance. . . . For Millet, the man of the soil, represents the whole human family : the labourer gave him the clearest type of our toil and our suffering. The peasant is to him a living being who formulates more strongly and clearly than any other man, the image, the symbolical figure of humanity. Millet, however, is neither a discouraged nor a sad man. He is a labourer who loves his field,—ploughs, sows and reaps in it. His field is Art. His inspiration is life—is nature, which he loved with all his strength. Let none seek to find in him anything but a pious and compassionate soul, who speaks from his heart.”

And it is this deep purpose, this philosophy and true poetry, uniting in his life and appearing in his Art, which makes his thought of such deep interest, and the meaning of it so much more to the world than just that part of it which was expressed in his pictures.

Near Cherbourg, in Normandy, “there lies a little valley open towards the sea, yet green and fertile, having enfolded in its greenness a small hamlet called Gruchy.” For many generations, the Millets have toiled there as peasants, and here Jean F. Millet was born. His father seems to have been possessed of that latent talent which is so often noticeable in the fathers of great men, talents that circumstances might possibly have fostered, but which have lain dormant, while the

sons have had every advantage. It is told of this father that the sight of him, and the words 'Hush! here's Millet,' were enough to quiet any coarse jesting in his native village. He cultivated the village music, and made the choir something remarkable in the neighbourhood. He developed no artistic faculty, but that he had it can hardly be doubted, for he would point out to François the fineness of a blade of grass, or say, 'Look at that tree—how large and beautiful! It is as beautiful as a flower,' or, pointing to a hill-side nook, would say, 'See, that house half-buried in the field is good—it ought to be drawn that way.' Sometimes he would carve or model a little. There is something beautiful and touching in seeing this unexpressed artistic taste springing up to its glorious fruition in the son, and we catch a glimpse of the true unity in Fatherhood and Sonship, under which deep mysteries may lie.

François' mother was a simple working woman; good to her son, but supplying him with few of the instincts or far-reaching thoughts which distinguished him. The two principal influences of his life were his great-uncle, who was a priest at Avranches, and his grandmother, who was also his god-mother, and who named him Jean after his father, and François after Saint Francis of Assisi, (a saint who would not have disowned the man who so loved nature.) Never through his life did Millet forget these friends and inspirers of his early life. When he was a very little

child the old grandmother would come to his bedside in the morning and say gently, 'Wake up, my little François, you don't know how long the birds have been singing the glory of God.' She would sing to him, carry him in her arms, and rock him to sleep. Millet said of her that she saw God in everything, beautiful, terrible, or inexplicable. 'It was a beautiful religion,' he adds, 'for it gave her the strength to love so deeply and unselfishly. She was always ready to work for others, to excuse their faults, to pity or to help them.'

When Millet, many years later, painted the picture of this household angel of his youth, he took infinite pains. He wanted, he said, to show the *soul* of his grandmother. [We are reminded of the story of the painter Blake, who in his dying moments said to his wife as she bent over him, 'Stay as you are ; you have been always an angel to me ; I will draw you,' and drew her as an angel, though she was a homely plain-featured woman to the rest of the world.]

Before we leave the subject of the old Breton peasant-woman, who fostered unconsciously such a noble mind, I may quote a letter which she wrote when she heard that her grandson was painting his picture of Saint Jerome's Temptation, in 1846.

Greville.

You say you are painting a portrait of St. Jerome groaning under the temptations which besieged his youth. Ah ! dear child, like him, reflect, and gain the same holy profit. Follow

the example of a man of your own profession, and say, "I paint for eternity." For no reason in the world allow yourself to do wrong. Do not fall in the eyes of God. With St. Jerome, think ever of the trumpet which will call us to the judgment seat. Thy mother is ill and part of the time in bed. I get more and more helpless, I can hardly walk. We wish you a happy and fortunate new year, full of the most abundant blessings of heaven. Let us soon hear from you. We are very anxious to hear how you are getting on. We hope well, and embrace you with sincere friendship.

Thy Grandmother,

LOUISE JUMELIN.

The great-uncle, who also influenced the young life of Millet, must not be passed over. 'He was brother of my father's father,' says Millet, 'he had been a labourer all his life, and had become a priest rather late. I think he had a little church in the time of the Revolution. I know that he was persecuted, for men came to search the house of my grandfather. . . . He said mass whenever he could in the house, and I have still the leaden chalice which he used. After the Revolution he remained with his brother, and performed the duties of vicar of the parish. He went every morning to the church to say mass. After breakfast he went to work in the fields. He almost always took me with him. . . . He had a most excellent heart. He taught for the love of God the poor children of the commune, whose parents could not send them to school. He even taught them a little Latin. When he died I

was about seven years old. My childish mind was filled with stories of ghosts and all sorts of supernatural things. To this day I enjoy them, but whether I believe them or not, I cannot say."

Millet then goes on to record how his uncle's grave was watched for a month by servants armed with guns and scythes to guard it from body snatchers. The grim description of this terrible trade was one of the little peasant-boy's first strong impressions. Millet went to a little school, where the other children thought him very clever. 'Heaven knows what they thought clever,' he says, 'the first thing I did was to fight, and being six and a half years old myself to beat a boy more than seven.' When he was twelve he went to the Church at Gréville to be confirmed. A young priest asked him if he did not want to learn Latin. 'With Latin you can become a priest or a doctor.' 'No,' said the child, 'I don't wish to be either. I wish to stay with my parents.' 'Come all the same,' said the Vicar, 'you will learn.'

So the child went to the parsonage. Virgil captivated him. The *Bucolics* and *Georgics* were real poetry to him, for they described the life he knew, revealed to him his own surroundings, made beautiful to him the bullocks bringing home the plough at the hour 'when the great shadows descend towards the plain.' The evening star—the tale of the shepherds—the life and joy in the work of the peasant. 'For with them are

woodland glades and the wild beasts' haunts, and a band of youths inured to toil and accustomed to little, the sacred rites of heaven and reverend sires ; Justice, as she departed from the earth, planted among them her latest footsteps.' In his best work this influence is apparent. To the dear old curé of Gréville, a gentle and sickly man, the boy poured out his dreams, his love of nature, his wonder about the clouds, his thoughts about the sky, about the changes of the ocean, and his love of the Bible and Virgil : to all this the curé would listen, but for answer he said sadly, ' Ah, poor child, you have a heart that will give you trouble one of these days ; you don't know how much you will have to suffer.'

But the school work was all blended with field work too, and Millet soon had to lay aside lessons altogether, and to work beside his father, to mow, make hay, bind the sheaves, thresh, winnow, plough and sow. In his spare moments of rest, he read to himself the 'Confessions of St. Augustine,' the 'Lives of the Saints,' but, above all, in every moment of leisure, his Bible and Virgil. In the midst of work his first ideas of art came to him : the old Bible had engravings in it which stirred his desire to draw what he saw, and he drew the garden, the stables, the fields with their far horizon of sea, the animals that went by. The sea had a wonderful power over him.

Coming home one day from mass, young Millet met

an old man with bowed back going wearily home. As he looked, the mystery of foreshortening dawned upon him. He came home, and with a lump of charcoal drew him. When his parents came in they recognized the old man. His father was troubled, and he questioned the lad, who was now eighteen. 'My poor François,' he said, 'I should gladly have sent you to have the trade of painting taught you, which they say is so fine ; but you are the oldest boy, and I could not spare you. Now your brothers are older, and more able to help me, we will go to Cherbourg, and see if you could make your living by this business.' A pupil of David's, called Mouchel, gave lessons at Cherbourg. The father and son went there, taking two drawings. Mouchel looked and said, 'You must be joking, the young man there did not make the drawings all alone ?' 'Yes, indeed,' said the father. 'I assure you I saw him make them.' 'No ! no ! the method is very awkward, but he never could have composed that : it is impossible !'

The Millets attested so energetically it was the work of François that Mouchel had to believe it. He then turned to the father and said, 'Well, you will go to perdition for having kept him so long, for your child has the stuff of a great painter.'

This man, of whom Sensier says 'he had a face like St. John the Baptist, illumined with the love of nature and the Masters,' was the first to give instruction to

Millet, but the boy only had two months of it before he returned to the death-bed of his father, and there was a great interruption to his artistic life. His mother and the farm occupied all his efforts for some little time; then the dear old grandmother, ever wise, said, 'Accept the will of God. Your father said 'Be a painter:' obey him, and go back to Cherbourg.' So the boy went back, this time to the studio of Langlois, who taught him little. Millet read much at this time, among other things Shakspeare, Walter Scott, Byron, Goethe, Victor Hugo, and his countryman, Chateaubriand. Speaking of his education he says, 'I never learned a lesson by heart. I never could get beyond addition in mathematics, and I do not understand subtraction, and the rules following. I came to Paris with all my ideas of art fixed, and I have never found it necessary to change them,'

At length it was decreed that Cherbourg had no more to teach him, and that he must go to Paris. 'I went off with a full heart,' he says. 'All that I saw on the way to Paris made me sadder. The great straight roads, the trees in long lines, the flat fields, the pasture lands so rich and so filled with animals that they seemed to me more like scenes in a theatre than reality. Then Paris, black, smoky, muddy, when I arrived at night, and which was to me the most discouraging sensation of all.

'I got to Paris one Saturday evening in January,

in the snow. The light of the street lamps almost put out by the fog, the immense quantity of waggons passing and re-passing, the narrow streets, the smell and air of Paris, went to my head and my heart, so that I was almost suffocated. I was seized with a sobbing which I could not control. I wanted to get the better of my feelings, but they overcame me with their violence. I could only stop my tears by washing my face with water which I took from a street fountain.

‘The coolness gave me courage. A printseller was there.—I looked at his prints, and munched my last apple. The lithographs displeased me very much. . . . They seemed to me signs for perfumery or fashion plates. Paris seems to me to be dismal and tasteless. For the first, I went to a little hotel, where I spent the night in a sort of nightmare, in which I saw my home, full of melancholy, with my mother, grandmother and sister spinning in the evening, weeping and thinking of me, praying that I should escape the perdition of Paris. Then the evil demon drove me on before wonderful pictures, which seemed so beautiful, so brilliant, that it appeared to me they took fire and vanished in a heavenly cloud.

‘My awakening was more earthly. My room was a hole with no light. I got up and rushed to the air. The light had come again, and I had regained my calmness and my will. My sadness remained, and I remembered the complaint of Job: ‘Let the day perish

wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said there is a man-child conceived.'

'So I greeted Paris, not cursing it, but with the terror that came from not comprehending its material and spiritual life, and full, too, of desire to see those famous masters of whom I had heard so much, and some little scraps of whom I had seen at the museum of Cherbourg.'

It was in January, 1837, that Millet arrived in Paris, and began his new life. He meant to have placed himself under the tuition of M. Georgés, an expert in the Royal Museum, but changed his mind, and entered the studio of Delaroche instead.

One day he came suddenly on the Louvre; he entered it with a beating heart, and he goes on:— I had imagined correctly what I should see. It seemed, to me that I was in a world of friends. For a month the Masters were my only occupation during the day. I observed them all, devoured them, analyzed them, and returned to them ceaselessly. The early ones drew me by their admirable expression of gentleness, holiness, and fervour; the great Italians, by their knowledge and their charm of composition. Sometimes the arrows of St. Sebastian seemed to go through me, when I looked at Mantegna's Martyrs. The Masters of that time are magnetic: they give you the joys and sorrows which trouble them: they are incomparable. But when I saw a drawing of Michael Angelo's—a man in a swoon—

that was another thing! The expression of the relaxed muscles, the planes and modelling of the figure weighed down by physical suffering, gave me a succession of feelings. I was tormented by pain, I pitied him, I suffered with that very body, those very limbs. I saw that he who had done this was capable, with a single figure, to personify the good or evil of all humanity. It was Michael Angelo,—that says all.

‘I had already seen mediæval engravings from him in Cherbourg: here I first touched the heart and heard the speech of him who has so haunted me all my life.

‘I then went to Luxembourg. With the exception of the pictures of Delacroix, whom I thought great in gesture, invention and colour, I found nothing remarkable, everywhere wax figures, conventional features, and a disgusting flatness of invention and expression.

‘The ‘Elizabeth’ and ‘Princes in the Tower’ of Delaroche were there, and I was to go to the studio of Delaroche. These pictures did not make me wish to go.’

He did not stay long with Delaroche, for he was unable to bear with the conventionality, and what seemed to him the falseness of his school. Life became very hard to Millet, and money very scarce. ‘What shall I paint?’ he said to Marolle his friend. ‘People reaping and making hay?’ ‘You can’t sell them,’ said Marolle. ‘Then farms and forest life?’ ‘Who knows anything about farms in Paris!’ ‘Well, what then?’ ‘Like Boucher, Watteau and the rest, illustrations, such as Parisians care for.’ One last effort Millet made

before that submission ; he drew a little sad picture of Charity with three nurslings. He took the picture about from shop to shop, and could get no offer. He came back broken down to Marolle : ' You are right ; give me subjects and I will paint them,' and then followed a period of pastels, imitations of Boucher and Watteau, and a time of husks for poor Millet.

In 1840, he first tried for the Salon. One of his portraits which he felt to be second-rate was admitted, but passed unnoticed. He then went back to Normandy, and painted his mother and grandmother. He also painted signboards,—this did not improve his chances of success, and about this time he married. His wife was very delicate, and died in two years, and the time of her illness was a terrible up-hill fight to the almost penniless artist. ' His material life was a daily fight,' says Sensier, ' he had the utmost difficulty in getting the most trifling sums paid. Watching the sufferings of a dying wife, being hampered for money, without help, without sympathy, he always looked back upon this time with horror ; but he never spoke of it with the bitterness with which smaller minds look back upon periods of neglect. He merely told the facts, and would say, ' Yes, there are bad people, but there are good ones also, and one good one consoles you for many bad. I sometimes found helping hands, and I don't complain.'

He went to Cherbourg in 1844. At this time colour was his strongest point,—he was ' noticeable for atmos-

pheric harmony, richness of tone, and a peculiar use of rosy gray.' His loving biographer does not hesitate to say that this was his florid period, and that his work was not at its best.

His wife died in 1844, but in 1845 he married again, 'a young girl who had long loved him in silence,' and proved a devoted wife. They went to Havre, where he painted portraits, and joy increased his power,—some of the pictures belonging to this time were full of promise.

With difficulty he got together 900 francs from his pictures, and went to Paris with his wife. Then began an up-hill life, full of want and anxiety. In Paris there were crowd and loss: 'black bread and anxiety are his portion.' He took up his quarters in a rough and ready studio in the artists' quarter, and painted Saint Jerome.' The Salon refused it, and he painted *over* it, 'Œdipus being taken from the Tree.' There are few things more pathetic than the loss which a little well-timed appreciation might have prevented. But this was Millet's baptism of suffering,—he was a painter only now,—he was not the prophetic artist which he afterwards became. Artists praised him for his painting of exterior life and called him 'a master of the nude.' But his biographer says of him, 'in the midst of all our decadence he kept a pure heart.'

'It was in 1847,' says Sensier, 'that I first made acquaintance with him. I went to his lodgings with a friend. He wore a strange garb, which gave his whole

person an outlandish look. A brown stone-coloured overcoat, a thick beard, and long hair covered with a woollen cap like those worn by coachmen, gave his face a character which made one think of one of the Middle Ages. His reception was kind, but almost silent. On finding that I had been brought up in the country and liked his painting, he began to be more expansive. 'Every subject is good,' he said, 'only it must be rendered with strength and clearness. In art there must be a governing thought expressed eloquently. We must have it *in ourselves*, and stamp it upon others just as a medal is stamped. Art is not a pleasure-trip—it is a fight, a mill that grinds. I am not a philosopher. I don't want to stop pain, or find a formula which will make me indifferent or a stoic. *Pain is perhaps, that which makes the artist express himself most distinctly.*'* He talked for some time, and then was silent, made timid by his own words. When we parted we felt that we had made the beginning of a serious friendship. I came again and saw Millet in his home, beside his wife, who hid with dignity the poverty of the household—he, rocking his little children, then slowly returning to his painting.'

A serious rheumatic pain soon came to increase his trials; but from this he arose, and painted a picture which succeeded for the Salon, but did not bring him

* We are reminded of Mrs. Browning's noble words—
In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such
I am content to suffer much.

money. Some of his friends knew his need, and obtained from the Society of Beaux Arts 100 francs, which they took to him. It was twilight, the room was freezing. Millet sat on a box unable to move. He said, 'Good day,' without stirring. When the money was handed to him, he said simply 'Thank you: it comes in time. *We* have not eaten for two days; but the important thing is the children have not suffered. Until to day they have had food.' He called his wife, saying, 'I am going to get wood,' and he never spoke of this again.

Varying success followed—a picture sold for 1800 francs, but he also did a cover of a song and was refused the 80 francs he demanded for it. After this, six drawings went for a pair of shoes, a picture for a bed. The times of the Revolution were hard, and Millet had to take his place at the barricades, but he had no military spirit, his heart only bled for all the suffering.

And now came the turning point of his life. For very existence he had to some degree pandered to the meretricious taste of France. With a lofty ideal, he had still allowed himself to be associated with work which was not lofty. In the history of his soul he was now alone in the wilderness tempted of the devil.

One evening, standing before a picture dealer's window, he saw two young men examining one of his pictures, painted to please the most popular taste. 'Do you know who painted that?' said one, 'Yes,' replied the other, 'a fellow called Millet, who paints only these

kind of subjects.' These words cut him to the quick. Coming home he told his wife the story. 'If you consent,' said he, 'I will do no more pictures of that sort. Living will be harder than ever, and you will suffer, but I will be free to do what I have long been thinking of.' Mme. Millet answered, 'I am ready, do as you will!' And from that time on, Millet, relieved in a sense from all servitude, entered resolutely into rustic art. We are thankful that the woman beside him was one of those who 'brought a mind,' whose mouth urged

"God and the glory! never care for gain,
The Present by the Future, what is that?"

and that a woman's unselfishness had part in the sowing of good grain, which was Millet's work in French art.

The cholera drove them from Paris to Barbizon, near Fontainebleau. Millet, Jacque, and Rousseau hired studios in peasants' houses, and set to work. 'We mean to stay here some time,' Millet wrote, 'the country is superb, we shall work more quietly than in Paris, and perhaps do better things.' The 'some time' he was to stay in Barbizon was 27 years—the rest of his life. And now he began his true work—his true inspiration had come. The world, the flesh, and the devil conquered, his soul and hands were free, his eyes had learnt from the purity of his heart to see God, and his pictures henceforth were filled with new life. The woods and pastures, the quiet plain of Barbizon, the

peasants at their toil, the wood gatherers, charcoal burners, quarrymen, men ploughing, harrowing, wood cutting, all were painted with faithful love, and a burning desire to show the beauty in their lives. He was to the French peasant what Wordsworth was to the Cumberland dalesman,

“And saw into the depths of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes.”

‘He had taken the little house of a peasant with three narrow low rooms, which served as studio, kitchen, and bedroom, for his wife and three children. Later, when the children increased to nine, the little house was lengthened by two more rooms. In the morning he dug or planted, sowed or reaped ; after lunch, he went into the low cold room called a studio. When headache overcame him, he would bound into the country which lay around him, springing like a child about the granite boulders which break the ground of Fontainebleau. Sabots on his feet, wearing an old red jacket and a weather beaten straw hat, he was in his element. When tired and overcome by the climb, he would throw himself on the ground and exclaim, like Goethe, ‘My God, how beautiful it is under Thy heaven.’ He writes to Sensier, ‘If you could see how beautiful the forest is! I rush there at the end of the day, after my work, and I come back every time crushed. It is so calm, such a terrible grandeur, that I find myself really frightened. I don’t know what those fellows, the trees,

are saying to each other—they say something we cannot understand, because we don't know their language, that is all.'

His great picture of 'The Sower,' was now painted, and in 1850 appeared in the Salon, and was received with enthusiasm. It is painted at Barbizon, but it is a remembrance of Gruchy. The following is a description of it published in France at the time. 'The night is coming, spreading its gray wings over the earth; the sower marches with a rhythmic step flinging the grain in the furrows; he is followed by a crowd of pecking birds; he is covered with dark rags, his head by a curious cap. He is bony, swart, and meagre, under this livery of poverty, yet it is *life* which his large hand sheds: he, who has nothing, pours upon the earth with a superb gesture the bread of the future. On the other side of the slope, a last ray of the sun shows a pair of oxen at the end of their furrow, strong and gentle companions of man, whose recompense will one day be the slaughter-house. This is the only light of the picture which is bathed in shadow, and presents to the eye, under a cloudy sky, nothing but newly ploughed earth. . . . There is something great and of the grand style in this figure, with its violent gesture, its proud raggedness, which seems to be painted with the very earth the sower is planting.'

The old grandmother died in 1851, and Millet could not reach her. He did not speak for days, and when he did it was to sob out, 'Oh! why could I not have seen

her once more.' His mother died two years later, Millet still unable to reach her. Poverty pressed, though his pictures began to succeed. Americans purchased where Frenchmen only admired, and Millet's best pictures went over the seas; but one Frenchman, M. Letrône, bought one for 2,000 francs. Then Millet took all his nine children to La Hague; he was near the old home now, and he drew faithfully and reverently all the scenes of his childhood.

One evening he was returning to Gruchy to the old home—the Angelus was ringing; he went into the church and an old man was kneeling there, Millet touched him. It was his first teacher.

'Is it you, little François?' said the old priest, as they embraced. 'And the Bible, François, have you forgotten it? The Psalms? do you ever read them now?'

'They are my breviary,' said Millet, 'I get from them all that I do.'

'These are rare words to hear now-a-days. . . . You used to love Virgil.'

'I love him still.'

'It is well. I am content. Where I sowed, good grain has grown, and you will reap the harvest my son.'

At the Exhibition of 1855, Millet exhibited a picture from Virgil called, 'A Peasant Grafting a Tree.' Théophile Gautier wrote of it, 'Millet understands the hidden poetry of the fields; he loves the peasants whom he paints, and in their resigned faces expresses his

sympathy with them, sowing, reaping, grafting, are to him holy acts having their own beauty and nobility. Why should not the peasant have a style like the hero?'

In Dante Rossetti's poems there is an exquisite sonnet to St. Luke, the Painter, 'Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray,' and Millet's Art was of the character which

"Soon having wist,
How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day
Are symbols also in some deeper way;
She looked through these to God and was God's priest."

Rousseau, the generous fellow artist, found a fabulous American who purchased one picture for 4000 francs; but this only went a little way under the pressure of the large family and young brothers left dependent upon Millet. He writes to Sensier, 'My heart is all black. . . . If you knew how dark the future, even the near future, looks! At least, let me work to the end.' To Rousseau he says, 'Life is a sad thing, and few spots in it are places of refuge. We come to understand those who sighed for a place of refreshment, of light and of peace. One understands what Dante makes some of his people say, speaking of the time they passed on earth—the *time of my debt*.' And yet in this time of his anguish he painted what are said to be his three most beautiful pictures, 'The Gleaners,' 'The Angelus,' and 'Waiting.' Millet has touched the highest in the pathos of 'The Angelus,' with the wide plain, the distant church, the bent heads of the tired peasants, and the

glow of the peaceful evening light against which they stand. As we look, we feel the peace steal into the depths of our hearts. We can almost think it is the dawn of a new creation, can almost believe that the weary round of the world is done, that the mist of the toiling ages has passed, and that God has said, 'Let there be rest,' and there is rest.

But the rest in that picture has been the growth of pain and anguish. The painter was tempted to end his suffering by his own hand more than once. Once he told his terrible thought to his friend, then cried suddenly, 'Come, let us go and see the sun set ; it will make me feel better'—and that, among other thoughts, seems wrought in this beautiful picture—the 'sky-breadth and field silence' are symbols here.

Sensier adds, 'Out in the fields at the close of day, Millet said : 'see those objects which move over there in the shadow, creeping or walking. They are the spirits of the plain—in reality, poor human creatures—a woman bent under her load of grass ; another who drags herself along exhausted beneath a fagot of wood. Far off they are grand, they balance the load on their shoulder—the sun obscures their outlines—it is beautiful—it is mysterious.' So every time that Millet touched the earth with his foot, he was strengthened and consoled.' But as well as rest there is music in this picture of the Angelus. Millet said of it to Sensier, 'You can hear the bells? I am content : you understand it. It is all I ask.' The Angelus was finally bought by Van

Praet, the Belgian Minister, but not for some time, and difficulties pressed. Millet writes: 'We have wood for only one or two days, and they will not give it us without money.'

The Salon persecuted him for adhering to his own art. 'Death and the Wood-cutter,' which Sensier says is one of his best pictures, was refused. 'They wish to force me into their drawing room art,' said Millet, 'to break my spirit. No, no, I was born a peasant, and a peasant I will die. I will say what I feel. I paint things as I see them, and I will hold my ground without retreating one sabot.'

Sensier, who was trying to sell his pictures, resorted to a device. He hung up the 'Sewing Women' without telling the name of the artist. Delaroche saw it, 'A new man,' he said, 'find out his name.' 'A peasant named François Millet.' 'Millet, my pupil? A strong man, head full of imagination, and a strong hand. Ah! I am not surprised.'

But when things were at the worst, some picture dealer had prevision enough to engage Millet to paint for him exclusively for three years, at a thousand francs a month. This gave him respite from care, and though he lost by it in money value, he gained in rest.

In 1861, a change for the better came. Millet had three pictures in the Salon. Opinion began to vary. Artists saw something in his art they had not believed was there.

'Millet's is great strong art,' said some, 'it is like the

fresco of an old Florentine,' and yet the art critics were chary of their praises ; and for what they gave Millet hardly cared. Of one of them he says, 'His long strings of empty words, his hollow praises, give me the sensation of having been made to eat pomade.' And about others, 'I ask you,' he added, 'what can I find good, or serious, for the correction of my faults in the invectives of my critics. I look in vain for anything but noise, not one counsel which I could use.'

Three peaceful years of work and growing insight followed, then a terrible shock in the suicide of a fellow artist, which darkened his soul and his painting for awhile ; but he emerged and clung more faithfully than ever to the truth he had found and fought for. He was accused of being a Socialist, a Saint-Simonist. 'I don't know what it means,' he says, and adds nobly : 'Some tell me that I deny the *charms* of the country. I find much more than charms, I find infinite glories. I see as well as they do the little flowers of which Christ said that 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' I see the halos of dandelions, and the sun, also, which spreads out beyond the world its glory in the clouds. But I see as well, in the plain, the steaming horses at work, and in a rocky place a man well nigh worn out, whose '*Hahn*' has been heard since morning, and who tries to straighten himself a moment and breathe. The drama is surrounded by beauty.

'It is not my invention ; this 'cry of the ground' has been heard long ago. My critics are men of taste and

education, but I cannot put myself in their shoes, and as I have never seen anything but the fields where I was born, I try to say as best I can what I saw and felt when I was at work. Those who want to do better have, I am sure, full chance.'

In a letter on his principles of Art, he says: 'Which is the handsomer, a straight tree or a crooked tree? The one that is in its place. I therefore, conclude, that the beautiful is the suitable.' He drew about this time a 'Flight into Egypt,' and a 'Christ rising from the Tomb,' the latter remarkable for its joy and the upward springing motion of the central figure that no death can hold.

He next painted from Theocritus, and drew inspiration from Robert Burns. Reading Theocritus, he says, 'makes him know that one is never so Greek as when painting naïvely one's own impressions, no matter when received. Burns proves this also.' He next studied Shakspeare and Lammenais' translation of Dante. A picture soon after, called a 'Shepherdess,' was a marked success.

We come now to 1865, and find him advising Sensier how to write on Art: 'It seems to me you might show—going back somewhat—that Art began to decline from the moment the artist did not lean directly and naïvely upon impressions made by nature: that cleverness, naturally and rapidly, took the place of nature, and decadence then began. Strength departs without constant relation with nature, and as example, the fable

of Antæus could be used, whose powers diminished when his foot did not touch the ground, and on the contrary, took new vigour every time he reached it. . . . At the bottom it always comes to this: *a man must be touched himself in order to touch others*, and all that is done from theory, however clever, can never attain this end, for it is impossible it should have the breath of life.'

In naïve contrast to these profound depths, we have in a letter soon after a lively account of a grand dinner to which he went, where he said he felt so awkward that he watched those who were helped before him, that he might see what they did with their food.

We have him also writing of the frost and fog effects in the forest, and the bushes, briars, tufts of grass, all the little sprigs of every kind, to which he said, 'it seemed as if nature wished to give a chance to show they were inferior to nothing—poor down-trodden things.' These things are part of 'the treasures of the snow,' which Job speaks of.

In 1856, his sister Emile died; he went to Gréville to her death bed. His wife was ordered to Vichy, and from thence he went on to Auvergne, gathering subjects for painting in every place. 'My head is full of all we saw,' he says, 'the glory of God dwelling upon the heights, and other heights veiled in darkness. . . . O sadness of field and wood, I should miss too much in not seeing you.'

In 1867 there came the fresh excitement of the great

Exhibition ; Millet's friends expected it would bring him great glory, he himself was less sanguine. In the same year, Rousseau, his dear friend, died. 'I am trembling and overwhelmed,' writes Millet. The next year the world remembers and recognises him ; he is made Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Those who had to give it hesitated long, and finally gave it deprecatingly. They were astonished at the rapturous enthusiasm which was called forth in the slowly growing public which Millet had formed for himself. There is no record of how Millet received the honour, it had probably come like most fame—too late. In 1870, he was made one of the jurors of the Exposition, and then followed the war. Barbizon was no longer peaceful and safe, Millet had to leave his beloved home. He writes in September to Sensier from Cherbourg, and is unable to make any sketches for fear of being apprehended as a spy, 'I have no heart to write of the spring,' he says, 'which comes in spite of all these horrors ;' but he enjoyed as keenly as ever going back to his native place and showing it to his friend Sensier, who joined him in August at Greville. To Sensier it felt as if he were walking in Millet's pictures. In November, 1871, Millet returned to Barbizon. Fame is won now and health is gone. 'My eyes are very painful. I write very little which distresses me ;' he writes, but his principles of art are as firm as ever. He writes in 1873 to a Brussels critic, with a humility betokening the highest reach of the mind, 'You say of

me things which I consider to be so desirable, that I dare not believe myself possessed of them. . . . But let me put myself aside quietly, that I may say (without stumbling over my own toes) that I must give you great praise for considering things from their fundamental side. It is the only true, solid side. Many people seem to think that art is only a sort of show of professional ability. *You* understand that the artist must have a high and definite aim. . . . It depends upon his aim and the way in which he reaches it, that an Artist is of interest.'

In 1873, Millet's picture of a 'Woman with a Lamp' was sold for 38,000 francs, another for 25,000 francs, but it came too late—he was dying. Still he worked and loved. 'If my body is weakened, my heart is not cold,' he writes. Honour and orders poured in. Sensier came to him in July, 1874, full of tenderness and interest in his work, but Millet was sad. One bright holiday, full of love and sunshine, they spent with the children in the forest. Afterwards he grew worse. He made parting requests of his family, begged them to cling together, and said of himself, that 'his life was closing *just as he was beginning to see into nature and art.*'

In the first days of January, 1875, when the doctors no longer hid their anxiety about him, Millet had gone to sleep between two attacks of fever. He was suddenly awakened by the noise of guns, and the baying of a pack of hounds. A stag, driven by the hunters and filled

with frenzied terror, had jumped the fences and taken refuge in a neighbour's garden. The wretched animal was cruelly butchered. Millet, who had never liked huntsmen, was struck by the tragedy. 'It is an omen,' said he. He was right ; he had but a few days to live. The great painter breathed his last on January 20, 1875.

'It would be a mistake to reproach him with having suppressed details, and taken away accidentals ; he was seeking the essential and he found it. Millet had his ideal and even if he did not always succeed in reaching it, it will always be to his honour that he strove with indomitable energy to be faithful to truth while escaping the littleness of prose.' We remember Browning's words of Andrea Del Sarto,

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for?"

There is something in the strength and breadth of this man's mind that gives us a sense of fresh air and breathing space. He is as great as a man as a painter. An American critic says of him, 'He is the one artist of the century most sure to take his place among the great of all time.' However this may be, of this we may be sure, that the purity and nobility which he strove for, have gained immeasurably in France through him. We have only our own lives,' says the same critic, 'we cannot tarry here in earthly galleries and libraries, awaiting the judgment of the ages upon the poems and pictures that come straight to our own hearts from the hearts of those who are suffering and working in our

own time. . . . Millet's is, indeed, at the present moment the most powerful as we believe it to be the most saving modern influence in France and America, within sculpture and painting.'

It must be well for all of us in days when we are so much tempted to judge by outward appearances, or to be swayed by fashionable opinions, to study such a character as Millet's and to learn from him of the beauty which we shall find lying in the common scenes around us, when our eyes have learnt to see it. But more than this we learn from such a life that Reality is the truest teacher ; that Life, and Love and Labour are Sacraments in which we may find the real presence of God, and that the noblest artist is the man who finds most of the divine in what is human, and so paints it that others may find it also.

We end with Millet's own words. 'We can start from any point and arrive at the sublime, and all is proper to be expressed, provided one's aim is high enough. Then what you love with the greatest passion and power becomes a beauty of your own which imposes itself upon others. Let each bring his own. . . The whole arsenal of nature has ever been at the command of strong men, and their genius has made them take, not the things which are conventionally called the most beautiful, but those which suited best their places. . . Decadence set in when people began to believe that Art, which she (Nature) had made was the supreme end : when such and such an artist was taken as a model and an aim without remembering that *he* had his eyes fixed on infinity.'

WORDSWORTH.*

I WANT to say to you to-day something about the life of Wordsworth, and what it taught him about other lives. It must necessarily be very little that I can say on such a great subject; but it may help you when you are reading his poems for yourselves, to have realised, even in some small degree, what he felt life means to us.

Wordsworth is the poet who has penetrated most deeply the spiritual thought of our time. He would probably be the first to tell us that he had gone a very little way:—that all his knowledge was that he knew nothing, and yet we must always feel that his poetry leads us *out* of this life even by its intensity of appreciation of it. That is to say it leads us out of what *we know* of this life, into a larger, vaster one, a life in which the things about us assume their true proportions instead of false ones, and become to us real, instead of shadows.

It is not necessary to dwell long upon the incidents of the life of Wordsworth, because his real life was not

* A Lecture given at the Ladies' College, July, 1878.

the amount of days and years he lived, but the work he did in them, and that life we find in his poems. Yet there are few lives which are more closely connected with the work done in them, and we can trace his growth in the parallels of his life and verse.

One reason for this is that few poets have shown us so much of themselves as he has done. He does not do it by introspection, but from the same philosophic standpoint from which he studies all the works of nature and himself as one of them.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.*

We can see how 'the child was father to the man,' as we picture to ourselves the river with 'the voice that flowed along his dreams,'† the rocks and pools 'shut out from every star all the green summer,' 'the sands of Westmoreland,' 'the creeks and bays of Cumbria's rocky limits,' 'the leagues of shining water,' 'the solitary hills,' 'the naked crag,' and 'the loud dry wind' which were his teachers. The life he led in his Cumberland homes at Cockermouth and Penrith and Hawkshead, with its freedom, its access to all natural beauty, and its simplicity and purity, was that which was most likely to foster such poetry as his,—the 'high thinking' to which 'plain living' is the fittest nurse. It was not surprising that even in childhood he felt 'gleams like the flashing of a shield' and 'nature spake

* Prelude, Book I.

† Prelude, Book I.

to him rememberable things,"* but it was a childhood marked by few events.

In the first book of the *Prelude* the poet tells us of himself at five years old, when he made 'one long bathing' of a summer's day, in the bright blue river that flowed by the margin of the terrace walk at his old home, or

"Leaped through flowery groves of yellow ragwort."

When he was eight years old, his mother died. Of her he says

"She who was the heart

And hinge of all our learnings and our loves."†

Afterwards he draws pictures for us of his new home in the vale of Esthwaite, of his expeditions when he was a boy of ten, a big-boned sturdy adventurous lad, in search of game; of his school-life, and the good old Dame Tyson with whom he lodged; of his skating, fishing, kite-flying, and boating, and of graver moments when the wind and the sunset spoke to him, or he stood for half-an-hour lost in boyish thought by a boy's grave. He was one of

"A race of real children, not too wise,
Too learned, or too good, but wanton fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate.

Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain and doubt and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth."‡

* *Prelude*, Book I. † *Prelude*. Book V. ‡ *Prelude*, Book V.

Such was the poet's boyhood, and as he drank in the freedom of nature at every pore she unconsciously prepared him to resent the thralldom in which man had bound himself. This was his preparation for life until he was in his seventeenth year and

"The immortal spirit grew
Like harmony in music."*

while 'the dark inscrutable workmanship' reconciled in him 'discordant elements,' and with his thoughts full of hope he passed on to Cambridge and to fresh inspirations, though his hopes were doomed to some disappointment, for the student's life of his day was not what he had pictured it.

Up to this time we have few traces of his poetic faculty: the power of composition seems to have developed slowly in him, though there are traces of thought and grace in the 'Lines written in very early youth,' which commence,

"Calm is all nature as a resting wheel."

Meanwhile the great world outside the quiet Lake country had been deeply moved. When Wordsworth was six years old, America made her Declaration of Independence: when he was eighteen, the patriot George Washington was proclaimed first President of the Republic of the United States. Chatham had spoken, and Pitt and Burke were speaking in England. France had roused herself from the lethargy of despair,

* Prelude, Book I.

and before Wordsworth was five-and-twenty, Lafayette had sent the key of the fallen Bastille to Washington, and had acknowledged in this significant way how much of the new life in France had come from the revolutionary movement in America. In Scotland Robert Burns, and in Germany Goethe, were singing of liberty. The eyes of all lovers of liberty turned hopefully to France, and Wordsworth among the number turned his steps to the land of promise. He would have remained there and sacrificed himself to a forlorn hope had he been free to do so, but happily for us he was recalled to his own country and he came back to his real life's work, to give his aid in breaking even worse fetters than those of tyranny and despotism, the fetters of ignorance, selfishness, and artificiality which men bind round themselves while they blindly believe that they are free.

It was this freeing of humanity which was henceforth the great hope of Wordsworth's life. He loved freedom, he longed with the deepest fervour to set others free, not from the laws which would restrain and help them to restrain themselves, but from the thralldom of their self-love and blindness. And his onward steps in this path of liberty are so marked and clear that we can follow them from its dawning to its consummation from that first freedom of nature when

"He stood alone
Beneath the sky as if he had been born
On Indian plains : "*"

* Prelude, Book I.

passing on through the aspiration roused by the spirit of the Revolution when

“as if awaked from sleep

The nations hailed their great expectancy,”*

and he ‘approached the shield of human nature from the golden side ;’ through the disappointed hopes and clouds of doubt in early manhood from which he won wider views of nature and of humanity, until the poet saw at length his own life’s mission—to teach men

“To have freedom in themselves,

For this alone is genuine liberty.”

Henceforth his life was lived ‘in forwarding a day of firmer trust,’ and teaching us how

“The mind of man becomes

A thousand times more beautiful than the earth

On which he dwells, above this frame of things

(Which, ’mid all revolution in the hopes

And fears of men doth still remain unchanged)

In beauty exalted, as it is itself

Of quality and fabric more divine.”†

And now having found the true purpose of his life, the incidents of Wordsworth’s career have less interest. ‘His life of eighty years is not divided by profoundly felt incidents ; its changes are almost wholly inward, and it falls into broad untroubled spaces.’‡

He had discovered that he had something to say to

* Prelude, Book VI. † Prelude, Book XIV.

‡ W H. Pater, Essay on Wordsworth, “Fortnightly Review.”

the world and began to say it. And what he had got to say was *truth*, and he was so deeply impressed with its significance and solemnity that he felt compelled to say it truly. This was why he turned aside from the formalism and conventionality of the writing of the age immediately before him and waged his war of simplicity.

You will sometimes hear it urged against him that he is so absurdly simple, that he chooses such common subjects. Why should he write about an idiot boy, and a pedlar, and a pet lamb, and a little cottage girl playing in a churchyard? Why should his longest poem be only the description of a country excursion without any exciting adventures in it? Wordsworth's own reasons are given in his eloquent prefaces, where he explains carefully the difference between pathos and simplicity. We must remember always in considering his poetry that it was of a crusading character, it was at war with what was unreal and untrue; it was what Carlyle would call 'a revolt against shams.'

And this is the clue perhaps to what you may hear called trivial in his poems. Wordsworth had a great aim in view, and just as a skilful teacher illustrates his subject not by one example only, but by many of the same kind, massing his evidence by cumulative force, so he takes his illustrations from the simplest objects in great variety.

The triviality or seeming triviality of several of his poems always seems to me one of the most conclusive proofs of his greatness. The self-importance which is

attributed to him by some, probably arose from his overwhelming sense of the importance of that which he had to teach. A mind that had been merely intent on its own reputation or success would have pruned and selected that which it laid before the world, but in Wordsworth there is nothing of such a spirit. He pours out all that bears on his subject with a perfect unconsciousness of himself. It matters not to him for his own sake that any one should call him a great poet, it matters exceedingly that they should not miss even the minutest particle of the truth which he thinks he can help them to find.

A timely legacy of a few hundred pounds from a friend, Riseley Calvert, enabled him to establish himself at the Lakes where he was afterwards given the office of Stamp Controller, which brought him a competence without riches. He married and lived a life of calm happiness with his wife and the sister who had been the inspiration and impulse of his earlier days : the sister of whom he wrote—

“She gave me eyes, she gave me ears.”

His chief trials were the death of his brother John, a sailor, and in later life of his daughter Dora : but during his long life at the Lakes (for at Rydal Mount alone he lived 37 years) he continued to pour out a rich stream of poetry. For many years it was unappreciated. A Book of Lyrical Ballads to which Wordsworth contributed many of his best known things, such as ‘We

are Seven,' and Coleridge 'The Ancient Mariner,' was a complete failure at the time.

Very slowly Wordsworth's work began to be appreciated; he created his own school of readers. In 1843 he was made poet-laureate, in 1847 he lost his daughter, in 1850 he died in a good old age.

But we need not dwell on his life or death, for to us he is a living voice. And so we turn to what he uttered, but must be content to-day to take from his poems only a few illustrations of his thoughts about life.

Perhaps the words which most truly describe the strength and genius of Wordsworth's poetry are these—

“While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We *see into the life of things*.”*

And when we realize what is meant by 'seeing into the life of things,' we feel that there is very little left to want in any poetry which possesses this power.

“So build we up the Being that we are;
Thus deeply drinking in *the soul of things*
We shall be wise perforce.”†

First, then, Wordsworth sees into that part of nature which from lack of knowledge we are accustomed to call 'inanimate.' No one has realized more completely than he has done the harmony of the life around us. Nature

* Tintern Abbey.

† The Excursion, Book IV.

to him is never inanimate. He looks upon a deserted spring and says of it—

Beside yon spring I stood
And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
Of brotherhood is broken.*

He bids the maiden—

Move along these shades
In gentleness of heart, with gentle hand
Touch, for there is a spirit in the woods.†

It was his faith that every flower

Enjoys the air it breathes.

He went forth in the early spring believing that

There is a blessing in the air
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

He claimed no less than Byron did, the sympathy of
'that around' him.

Ye *presences* of nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye visions of the hills
And *souls* of lonely places.‡

And he says,

From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling.

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* The Excursion, Book I. † Nutting. ‡ The Prelude, Book I.

I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still.*

He even questions how it is that he feels his own enjoyment transferred to inorganic natures, whether it was from

Excess in the great social principles of life,
Coercing all things into sympathy : or the power of truth
Coming in revelation.

By whatever means it came it was ever present with him, deeply penetrating all that he wrote. Nature *lives* and his endeavour was to make this evident to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear.

In all that is beautiful around us there is so much more than just what we apprehend for our own passing need. In the beautiful story of creation there were five perfect periods before man was made, and of each of them we are told that 'God saw that it was good.'

See how Wordsworth treats Nature. Take the Lines on Early Spring.

I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran :
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

* Prelude, Book II.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths ;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure :
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan
To catch the breezy air :
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man ?

Now if we ourselves had been writing this should we not have brought in some comparison between the spring and our own minds or some reference to those gone from us, something of our own love or sorrow or feeling ? But Wordsworth goes out of himself altogether into the great life around him, and feels that Nature, with its calm unerring obedience to law, is a more perfect and more joyous expression of that Life, than man can ever be while living in restless self-will and selfishness. All Nature speaks to him of a vaster life which comprehends it. To feel the sympathy which Nature can have with him is much, but it is not the widest thought he can have : he realizes also the

sympathy which he can have with Nature, and he delights in the knowledge that his realization of this sympathy is not necessary to its reality ; that for those who do not consciously realize it, it also exists. He is thankful for instance in this beautiful sonnet, for the fellowship which he can feel with the sunset and the sea ; but he rejoices in knowing that the unconscious enjoyment of the child by his side is part of that fellowship, and an expression of the life that he feels everywhere.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity :
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea.
Listen ! the mighty Being is awake
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear child ! dear girl ! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought
Thy nature is not therefore less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Other poets bring Nature into sympathy with us and our common joys and griefs, so that tears

Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes
In looking on the happy autumn fields
And thinking of the days that are no more,

but Wordsworth leads us into that wider fellowship with nature by which

The meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

He draws us on into the larger life in which the dead live as well as those whom we call the living, for all live to God, and Nature is to him not the reflection of our moods, but the voice of God. Listen to what Nature said to him by the Lake of Grasmere, one evening after a stormy day, when his mind was full of the approaching death of a great man.

Loud is the vale ! the voice is up
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty unison of streams
Of all her voices, one !

Loud is the Vale : this inland depth
In peace is roaring like the sea ;
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

Sad was I, even to pain deprest
Importunate and heavy load !
The Comforter hath found me here
Upon this lonely road.

And many thousands now are sad—
Wait the fulfilment of their fear ;
For he must die who is their stay,
Their glory disappear.

A power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss,
But when the great and good depart
What is it more than this,

That Man who is from God sent forth
Doth yet again to God return?
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?

And thinking thus of Nature, he brought to the observation of it a reverent and receptive mind, with every sense quickened and every faculty brought to bear upon it. It is this which makes his poems so true to natural life, so faithful to natural beauty. See how truly he writes of the daisy, the celandine, the evening primrose, of the fox-glove, or the 'pliant harebell swinging in the breeze on some grey rock.' Look at the tender grace in the description of 'Nutting,' or the sunset described in the second book of the *Excursion*, beginning

A single step that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!

A sunset which might have been the fitting end of the day begun at the sunrise described by Keats in *Hyperion*.

Or as a perfect example of this intense appreciation of

natural sights, let us take the poem commonly known as 'The Daffodils.'

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd
A host of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle in the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced : but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee ;
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company :
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude :
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Here is the sort of wealth which is open to us all, the wealth of our common lives. Do you remember in the Pilgrim's Progress that the House Beautiful 'stood by the wayside' ?

And notice too that Wordsworth was as receptive to the beauty of sound as to that of sight.

Take the magical lines to the Cuckoo in the Poems of the Imagination—take the lines to the Skylark in the Poems of the Fancy which seem to breathe the very song of the bird itself, and to take us up with it in ‘its madness and joy divine.’ It is interesting, in passing, to notice the mellowing and depth which have come into another poem to the skylark written twenty years later. It was true wisdom which had strengthened with years and grown in its knowledge of the Highest, till it could see in the skylark not only the ‘happy happy liver,’ but

Type of the wise who soar but never roam,
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.

Or take as an example of the power which *sound* had for Wordsworth the lines to the Echo, one of the most complete and exquisite of the shorter poems, and notice how he speaks of ‘the inward ear,’ as in the Daffodils of ‘the inward eye.’

Yes, it was the mountain echo
Solitary, clear, profound,
Answering to the shouting cuckoo
Giving to her sound for sound.

Unsolicited reply
To a babbling wanderer sent ;
Like her ordinary cry,
Like—but oh, how different !

Hears not also mortal life ?

Hear not we unthinking creatures ?

Slaves of folly, love, or strife—

Voices of two different natures ?

Have not we too ? Yes, we have

Answers and we know not whence :

Echoes from beyond the grave

Recognised intelligence !

Such rebounds our inward ear

Catches sometimes from afar—

Listen, ponder, hold them dear :

For of God—of God they are.

But we must pass from this insight into the life of Nature to Wordsworth's insight into the life of Man.

Through all the mighty commonwealth of things

Up from the creeping plant to sovereign man*

the brotherhood of the world was to him no mere form of expression, it was an all pervading, all harmonizing reality. It was the distinct aim and purpose of his life to make this brotherhood known and felt. The dream of his youth was to see it brought out and acknowledged as a result of the French Revolution, and when this hope was dispelled, his whole nature turned with a grand impulse to the truer and deeper source of brotherhood, the reverence of the humanity in each individual. From henceforth to him human nature was stamped with the impress of the divine message, 'What God hath

* The Excursion, Book IV.

cleansed that call not thou common,'—from henceforth there was to him no 'commonplace.'

There littleness was not ; the least of things
Seemed infinite.

In the simplest folk he found the deepest truths, in little children he found the highest teaching, in all he found something to reverence.

There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes.

'What is a Poet?' he says, in one of his Prefaces, 'He is a man speaking to men, a man it is true endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind.'

Such was Wordsworth himself, fighting for the truth, crying out from the depths of his own comprehensive soul.

I am not heartless : for there's not a man
That lives, who hath not known his godlike hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings in the strength of nature.

.
O heavens! how awful is the height of souls.*

And therefore he can write about the life of ordinary men around him—of the Leech Gatherer, of the

* Prelude, Book III.

Waggoner, of the Brothers, of Peter Bell, of old Matthew, of Father William, of Ruth, of Lucy Grey, and find sympathy for all and a worthy theme in each. His enthusiasm may occasionally carry him into extravagance in the simplicity of the forms of his expression, but the truth and hidden life of human nature is always to be found in his pictures.

Look at the human sympathy expressed in the dialogue called *The Brothers*. In the opening lines we have the picture of the old clergyman sitting outside his cottage, with his wife and daughter beside him spinning. The old man watches a stranger in the churchyard for some time, and at last feels that he must go and speak to him. The stranger is one Leonard who had been an orphan in the Dale and had one brother. They had been shepherds, but Leonard had given up shepherding and had gone to sea many years before: he had now returned, and was afraid to ask if his brother, his only friend, whom he had loved devotedly, was living. He goes to the corner of the churchyard where his family is buried.

He had found

Another grave, near which a full half-hour

He had remained.

But he hoped he had seen this grave before. The old clergyman joins him, and if he recognises him does not tell him so, neither does Leonard make himself known, but draws out the stories of the dalesman in the hope that he may gain some news of his brother. The old.

priest tells him of the quiet joys and griefs of the dalesfolk :

A shepherd dies
 By some untoward death among the rocks ;
 The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge ;
 A wood is felled :—and then for our own homes
 A child is born or christened, a field ploughed ;
 A daughter sent to service ; a web spun ;
 The old house-clock is decked with a new face.

 And then for death ?
 We have no need of names and epitaphs ;
 We talk about the dead by our firesides.
 And then for our immortal part ? We want
 No symbols, sir, to tell us that plain tale.

Poor James had pined after Leonard went away, and had even wandered about in his sleep looking for him. Every one loved him, and twenty homes were open to him. But one day he had lain down near the edge of the Pillar Rock, and he was never seen again alive. His body was picked up far below, and it was supposed that he had fallen asleep, and in his sleep had walked to the edge of the rock and fallen over. For simple pathos the description of Leonard coming upon his brother's grave can hardly be excelled.

Leonard. And that then is his grave. Before his death

You say that he saw many a happy year ?

Priest. Aye, that he did,

Leonard. And all went well with him ?

Priest. If he had one, the youth had twenty homes.

Leonard. And you believe then that his mind was easy?

Priest. Yes, long before he died, he found that time
Is a true friend to sorrow; and unless
His thoughts were turned on Leonard's luckless
fortune,

He talked about him with a cheerful love.

Leonard. He could not come to an unhallowed end?

Priest. Nay, God forbid!

The wistful, almost self-accusing questioning, the repressed grief, the pathetic silence with which Leonard turns away, make the scene so real to us, that our sympathy is moved to a degree which further expression might fail to do.

This sympathy with human life deepens in Wordsworth with years. The *Prelude* and *Excursion* are full of it, and there are three poems inspired by it which blend into a perfect chord.—The *Elegiac Stanzas* suggested by picture of Peele Castle in a storm, the *Lines on Revisiting Tintern Abbey*, and the Ode called 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.'

In the *Elegiac Stanzas* the poet alludes to the death of his brother as the influence which had deepened his sympathies,

A deep distress hath humanised my soul.

and he condemns the life which can be content with any enjoyment self-centred.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
 Housed in a dream, at distance from the kind.
 Such happiness, wherever it be known,
 Is to be pitied, for 'tis surely blind.

.

But welcome fortitude and patient cheer,
 And frequent sights of what is to be borne,
 Such sights, or worse, as are before us here,
 Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

This is the gain of suffering, the clue to the mystery of
 pain and loss, which another poet has put in the words :

Knowledge through suffering entereth,
 And love is perfected by death.

In the Lines on Tintern Abbey, which are full of the
 power of remembered beauty, the poet shows how gradu-
 ally his life has deepened and his heart has expanded, as
 he has learnt 'to see into the life of things.'

For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the morn
 Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
 The still sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power.

.

And this prayer I make
 Knowing that Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her : 'tis her privilege
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
 From joy to joy.

And in the Ode on the Intimations of Immortality,

which is perhaps the most beautiful of all his poems, he-
ms up the teaching of a life-time in the words:

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live ;
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The whole thought and sequence of this poem is too vast to be spoken of now : but I have always felt that in these three there is a perfect harmony, and a depth of profound calm—the calm which is the highest work of 'human suffering.' There is first the gain of loss—the humanising work of sorrow ; there is next the larger sympathy which recognises 'the still sad music of humanity,' and then there is the human heart alive to every claim, and by its own strength of love, laying hold on hope.

And it was this human feeling which consecrated all life around Wordsworth. He cares to know what the Highland girl sings ; he cares to hear the story of the little cottage girl, of the beggar woman, of poor Susan in London listening to a thrush. All life is great to him as it must always be to him

Who hath among least things
An under sense of greatest, sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.

And his domestic affections were a strong part of this human development. His sister we have alluded to already—and in such a place as this College it is impossible to pass over the description of his wife in girlhood, womanhood, and advanced age.

She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight,
A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament.
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight too her dusky hair ;
But all things else about her drawn
From May time and the cheerful dawn :
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view
A spirit, yet a woman too ;
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty :
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet :
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles.

But now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine :
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death,
The reason firm, the temperate will,

Endurance, foresight, strength and skill :
A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort and command ;
And yet a spirit still and bright
With something of angelic light.

The repressed feeling and reticent tenderness in these lines may be taken as a type of much of the personal expression in Wordsworth : it is noticeable, also, to a marked degree, in the exquisite poem describing the child of nature, which commences 'Three years she grew in sun and shower.' The wonderful contrast between the keen vitality which the poet describes in the girlish life, and the blank of death is to be seen from these two verses :

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her : and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

Thus Nature spake. The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run !
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene ;
The memory of what has been
And never more will be.

But perhaps for pathos intensified by brevity and restraint, there are no lines of Wordsworth more complete than those which are so well-known that they have become familiar household words, and have

been the expression of many more griefs than the poet's own,—griefs which lie too deep to be eased by many words.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love :

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye ;
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be :
But she is in her grave and, oh !
The difference to me.

Most imperfect is the sketch I have given you of the human feeling in Wordsworth, but the more you need from him of the expression of this feeling the more you will find—the deeper your own realization of the ties which bind us all to each other in this common life, the more you will see that this poet has gone before all our thoughts and expressed them with his calm strong voice, leaving us the clue which shall yet solve the mystery of 'all this unintelligible world ;'

Learn, by a mortal yearning to ascend
Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
Encouraged, sanctioned chiefly for that end.
For this the passion to excess was driven
That *self might be annulled* : her bondage form
The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.

For to Wordsworth there was yet another Life : a life which contained and ruled all nature, which embraced all humanity.

The one
Supreme Existence, the surpassing Life ;
Which,—to the boundaries of space and time,
Of melancholy space and doleful time,*
Superior and incapable of change
Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
And hath the name of, GOD.

This is the life which touches him in all natural beauty. Nature to him is the sign and pledge of something beyond itself. It is the expression of that of which he is also an expression himself—it is the thought of God. In the Ode on Childhood he shows how human life leads him to the thought of this all-comprehending Life beyond our own. In the Lines on Tintern Abbey he shows how nature leads him to the same belief :

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with a joy
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

* The Prelude, Book VI.

And in humanity he finds the same law, the same presence :

Life, I repeat, is energy of love
Divine or human.

It is this life, he believes, which ennobles and raises out of commonplace all other life. In the life of God there is nothing small, nothing trivial, the minutes part is necessary to the great whole, and the very small amount that any of us can do for that whole is made worth doing because it can be done greatly—being done for God.

Wordsworth believed, and was inspired by the belief, that One Life has been lived among us, which touched for ever all other human life and made it well worth living, and it is in this belief that he has immortalised Duty. The word 'duty' is dear to us when we have learnt to link it with this life of God in us. It was the life of Him who said 'I came not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me.' It is the life of every one who prays honestly 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' If at first it seems to be 'the stern daughter of the voice of God,' let us look into its face steadily, and we shall see the smile of divine beauty—we shall see heaven opened. Listen to the gladness in this Ode to Duty :

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God !

O Duty ! if that name thou love

Who art a light to guide, a rod

To check the erring and reprove ;

Thou who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe ;
From vain temptations dost set free,
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity !

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them : who in love and truth
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth :
Glad hearts, without reproach or blot ;
Who do thy work and know it not ;
Oh ! if through confidence misplaced
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power around them cast

Serene will be our days ; and bright
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light
And joy its own security.
And they a blissful course may hold
Even now, who, not unwisely hold
Live in the spirit of this creed ;
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom and untried,
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide
Too blindly have reposed my trust ;
And oft when in my heart was heard
The timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray ;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought
I supplicate for thy control ;
But in the quietness of thought.
Me this unchartered freedom tires ;
I feel the weight of chance desires.
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face :
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads :
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh
and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power !
I call thee ; I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour :
Oh, let my weakness have an end !
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice :
The confidence of reason give
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live.

ANNIE KEARY.

THERE is a poem by the American poet Lowell called "Irene," which I cannot help linking with the character of Annie Keary, the subject of this sketch. We need sometimes to be reminded that we are not required to be perpetually striving after something which we are not, but rather to come to a consciousness and to endeavour to develop that which we are.

"Hers is a spirit, deep, and crystal clear,
 Calmly beneath her earnest face it lies
 Free without boldness, meek without a fear,
 Quicker to look than speak its sympathies :
 Far down into her deep and patient eyes
 I gaze, deep drinking of the infinite,
 As, in the mid-watch of a clear, still night,
 I look into the fathomless blue skies.

.

For this I love her great soul more than all,
 That being bound, like us, with earthly thrall,
 She walks so bright and heaven-like therein."

Annie Keary was born on March 3rd, 1825, in the parish of Bilton, near Wetherby, in Yorkshire. Her

father had been in the army, but afterwards became a clergyman. He was a man of considerable power of mind and of intellectual tastes, an eloquent preacher and much beloved by the poor, but he laboured under the disadvantages of bad health. There was a special bond between him and the little Annie, we are told by the sister who reverently and with exquisite feeling tells her story. 'They understood each other so well, these two who represented the Irish side of the family, who both loved their books so tenderly, who thought and dreamed, who lived and met in an ideal upper region, exchanging sweet smiles and confidences there over the heads of the drudging world below. There was ever a sort of comradeship between them, and when Annie was quite a small thing, she would sit upon her father's knee for hours while he told her stories of his youth; sometimes it might be of his wild Irish home, or again of the adventures in his campaigning career, when as a soldier he had lived out all the dashing, gay, Irish part of him. 'This and this you and I did or dared together, Nannie,' he would then say, humouring a favourite childish fancy of hers that she had really been his companion in arms, the comrade of all his early life. 'Twas you and I held fast side by side through that stiff march across the common in the heat, we two stormed Badajoz together, child,' and the child as her imagination fed greedily upon such congenial food, believed more firmly in the fancy which had originated in her own small brain, and began already

to live the two lives of the dreamer, the tale-teller, taking her first lesson in novel-writing at her father's knee. 'Yes, yes,' she would dream, 'it was papa and Annie who fought under Wellington together, and now they sit by the fire in cosy winter evenings, the two old comrades, and live the campaign over again.' Or, letting her thoughts reach back to some dim, remoter period of existence, would see sweet, misty pictures of the west, hear the soft chatter of the Irish tongue, run barefooted across the bog with merry little foster-brothers and sisters, to fish in the blue mountain lough, or to feast upon sweet milk and potatoes at the foster-parents' board in the cabin where papa was nursed, and where he laughed and sported away so many careless hours—but, somehow never without Annie; how could he ever have been anywhere without her?'

It was to these early talks perhaps, as well as to the more recent visit to Ireland, that we owe one of the most pathetic and beautiful novels of our day, 'Castle Daly.' The sympathy and the true discriminating feeling which makes Irish life so real to us in this remarkable book, and in the charming story for children which Annie Keary named 'Father Phim,' become greatly enhanced by this hereditary link, and proof of their fidelity to nature.

The mother's tales were of the old Yorkshire home, Lilling Hall—round which a scent of faded rose-leaves seemed to cling, and many quaint pictures of character,

and amusing stories she could tell her children, so that Annie's biographer maintains that her gift of humour came even more from her mother than her father.

There were brothers and sisters, too, who brightened and developed the young life of Annie Keary, and helped 'to line that nest of love into which God laid down her babyhood.' It was with them the dreams of her childhood were shared, her games invented, her imagination fostered. A very amusing instance of this early imagination is given, and will find a parallel in many homes, where imaginary personages have played their part, having no existence except in the brains of the children. 'There was a story round which our thoughts were always hanging, into which we were ready to plunge at any moment, and always with new delight. A story, yes, a story that had no end, that seemed to have grown up of itself and simply out of a name. A dwarfed woman passed the house one rainy day whilst two little faces were pressed against the nursery window pane, and four bright little inquisitive eyes looked through, and 'That's Mrs. Calkill,' said Arthur to Annie. That was all, but it was the beginning of endless bliss. Who was Mrs. Calkill? Annie knew, of course; she had known all about her for ever so long, only somehow she had never thought of mentioning her, but now she and Arthur had seen her—they had both seen her by daylight in the street, and they knew what her name was. It was Arthur who knew her name, he must have known her too

then, they both knew her, there was a real Mrs. Calkill. She was a fairy, very good, very clever, very powerful. She could go about just as she pleased, anywhere, at any time ; she knew what everybody was thinking about, and what all the children did. She governed her kingdom (the whole world) by means of a system of rewards and of dreadful punishments ; she never allowed any one to see her in her true fairy form ; now and then she passed down the street on a wet day, under a green cotton umbrella almost as big as herself, but ordinarily she flew. She very seldom passed down the street, only once in a hundred years, perhaps ; certainly she never passed during the lifetime of the children after that one rainy day. So much the better, that showed that she was a fairy and not a woman ; common people do the same thing over and over again, it is always something you least expect that happens about a fairy.'

This imaginary fairy, Mrs. Calkill, is introduced into the story of *Blind Man's Holiday*, and in the same manner we can find living transcripts of several of the scenes of Annie Keary's childhood in many of her books for children. Before Annie could remember, her father had changed his village home for a much gloomier one in the town of Hull, but home, like happiness, 'is what the mind makes it,' and Annie's surroundings seem never to have depressed her life. She had the well-spring in herself which would have made a desert blossom like the rose—she had the rare

power of making her own sunshine. 'I can fancy that I see her now,' writes her sister (and I offer no apology for quoting so freely from the sister's words, for there is a special charm in the way in which this memoir is written), 'the inspired child-face, pondering at first, then smiling at the suggestion of joyous little spirits, then, as the fancies took shape in her thoughts, the sweet eyes dilating with lights and depths of mystery and fun, till at last the dear lips opened, that had always something so delightful to say to us with 'Let us suppose now,' and a new world grew up around us, a world that might bloom and fade indeed, but whose seed lay henceforth in its outer self, a power of transformation latent after the first breath of those magic words.'

Annie began to be delicate about this time, and from this cause, as well as the difficulties of town life, she was necessarily much indoors. This drove her to books for companionship, and made them very real to her. From the library downstairs she used to fill her pockets (the large loose ones worn under the dress!) with volumes of Rollin and Plutarch, which she devoured with silent delight. Her other means of development seem to have been of a most heterogeneous nature. Missionary meetings, reading meetings, politics, and at last a bright young teacher, 'who made duty seem a pleasant thing,' all lent their aid, and carried Annie over several years. We are glad to think that a summer spent in the country on account of her father's

health, in a picturesque village at the foot of the Yorkshire moors, was one of the chief features of that early education.

A Boarding School was Annie's next experience, and apparently it was one of the true old fashioned type, where the week-day classes ran a curious little dull round. 'English, Grecian and Roman histories were read by them, half-an-hour being allowed for each at a time. The pupils looked at the backs of their books to be quite sure of what they were reading!' The sermon had to be written out on Sundays. 'Annie Keary,' exclaimed the teacher one morning as she was settling herself to the task of reading over a pile of sermon copy books, 'what do you think I am doing now? Praying for patience before I read your version of dear Mr. Baker's precious words! Do you know that you put your own feeble expressions instead of his? Listen to this, (opening the book and reading a paragraph at a venture) those are *your* words, Miss Keary, put into the very cream of the discourse; take the book away, and let me have something I can understand.' But Annie had the touch which turned everything to gold in a good sense, and the narrowness of her education was compensated by the widening of her views of life, which school intercourse gave her, and many of her school friends reappear in her novels, showing how she had appreciated and entered into their characters, when in daily intercourse with them. *Rosamond*, in 'Janet's Home,' *Cecil*, in 'Oldbury,' *Ruth*, in 'Through the

Shadows,' are all school friends, and remembrances of another appear in Mildred of 'a Doubting Heart,' and the heroine of 'Janet's Home.'

'Her imaginative reading of character gave her that faculty of insight which awakens sympathy, and works by the force of love, which sees the things that are not—not yet, that is to say apparent—and calls them as though they were, because it sees that they are potentially there, and will some day appear. It was always this potential good that Annie saw; it was revealed as by a lightning-flash to her loving heart, and never faded from it again. She never saw the worst side of others chiefly, or first, or indeed at all. One could not persuade her that anyone was out and out base, hypocritical, unworthy.'

She found some changes in her home life when she went back to it, and soon after the family removed to Clifton, for the sake of her father's failing health. After this, the current of this girl life is deeply stirred by events which followed each other rapidly. Annie was for some years engaged to be married to one whom she loved, and by whom she was strongly influenced. That this engagement was subsequently broken off, and yet that the beautiful life only grew more loving and sympathetic for all, is a proof of the greatness of that soul,

"Who being bound like us, with earthly thrall,
Yet walks so bright and heaven-like therein."

Increasing responsibility came upon Annie Keary's

awakening life, and for six years it was filled with the charge of her brother's three motherless children.

'The home she went to was a country home, in the village of Trent Vale, in Staffordshire. There she enjoyed plenty of leisure and freedom—she took in and gave out on all sides, renewing her acquaintance with nature, and exercising her newly discovered gift of writing. But everything she did was inspired by or turned towards what was the centre of her life—her care of the children. Whatever new she learned of bird, or insect, or flower, whatever beauty she discovered in written book or living action, she took straight to them, as a mother bird carries treasure to her nest. All changes of the hours, every season of the year, she set and turned to the requirements of nursery life; in summer time, the little garden and the field, the banks of the canal close by, the bluebell woods further away, had each their changing pleasures: the nursery, nay, the whole house, in winter afternoons and in the evenings' fire-glow were no less the inspirers of games or quaint, weird fairy tales. Some of the prettiest of her children's fairy tales, 'Little Wanderlin' amongst them, were written for that nursery.' Her nephew, who was one of the motherless children thus lovingly nurtured, writes of the many interests with which their childhood was filled, and says—'If she felt intolerance toward anything it was toward the series of Primers, which in ever-increasing numbers she saw flooding the world of literature, and she would often

say she would rather a child were taught to think in one language than to talk in half-a-dozen. . . . She delighted especially in natural history, and in telling stories of its wonders—as of how the mason-bee built his house of stones and mud ; of how the wasps papered their underground homes with paper made of wood fibres, or varnished their hanging cells to make them waterproof.’

The death of two brothers whom she had loved devotedly, and later that of her father, are records which shadow the next part of her life, and by this time her charge was over, and she had gone to live in London. The shadows thickened around her, her engagement was broken off, and the inward conflict which was to deepen and strengthen in herself all that which could aid and help others, had begun. ‘With Annie, however, the excess and disturbance of grief could not last very long, for it was a sort of necessity to her dutifully to adapt herself to the conditions by which she was surrounded. The storm had passed over her and the flowers of her life had been broken, but the sweetness of her nature asserted itself still through the pain, rising up to the surface, gleaming out in every word and look and action, like the sun’s rays in spring-time falling upon a snow-covered plain, waking its hidden flowers up again into the light. . . . It never seemed to put Annie out of sympathy with the fulness of the life of others, that her own life had been forced into a narrow channel ; no faintest touch o

bitterness found standing room in her heart. Sorrow did not age her either. No young girl was ever afraid to tell her love story to her: no aspirant after authorship felt shame in confiding to her the most imperfect beginning, ready as she ever was with just the comprehending, wise, and enlightening word that gave hope or patience to the disturbed heart or the unreasonable desire.' Her cheerfulness and power of spreading brightness are greatly enhanced by the knowledge that all her life she had to contend with the physical infirmity of partial deafness.

Her literary career had now fairly commenced. Her stories for children were followed by novels which found an increasing recognition from the reading public by their talent, sympathy, and freshness. 'Through the Shadows,' 'Oldbury,' 'Janet's Home,' and 'Clemency Franklyn,' are all filled with delicate perceptions and harmonious thought: while 'Castle Daly' rises to the first rank among our modern novels, and is full of power, and that insight which her sister describes in the words, 'she did not try to set others right, she only listened to and loved and understood her fellow-creatures.' The character of Anne O'Flaherty in its perfect conquest of self, could have been drawn by no one who had not learnt with personal knowledge the soul's power of victory. I know of few scenes in fiction more beautiful than those in 'Castle Daly,' which describe the Irish peasants kneeling near the windows to catch a farewell glimpse of Anne, and the parting

words with Connor and Ellen when Anne wills to be left alone to die, that they may be safe. It was inner sympathy much more than outward influences which shaped and gave rise to Annie Keary's stories.

In 1858 a friend took her to spend the winter in Egypt, as some delicacy of lungs showed itself in her. She writes of her voyage up the Nile with great enjoyment, but her heart seems to turn to home all the time, making it difficult for her to realise as much of the gain of foreign travel as many feel. On her return to England, she again devoted herself to her literary work, though it was varied by the nursing of her mother who had become an invalid.

During all this time Annie Keary's own spiritual life had been deepening and widening. The more straitened forms of her early thought had given place to the larger teaching of Professor Maurice and Charles Kingsley—other influences swayed her from time to time, but the tendency of her thought was to the wide conception of the love of God, which can transform all duties to man; and this was part of the secret of her very true and beautiful sympathy with the poor, whom she loved and helped so effectually.

One of the most beautiful parts of this life-story is the record of the help given by Annie Keary's love to poor girls whom she influenced for good. In the letters which she writes to them there is no patronage, no condescension, no removal of herself to a different plane for the purposes of instruction. She writes with

perfect fellowship of the life which is common to all. To a little servant girl whom she addresses as 'dear little Katie,' she describes in easy words the finish of a flower. To a poor girl in a reformatory she writes a letter about a white hyacinth, which is a good example of the way in which she understood nature as well as of her exquisite sympathy.

'We have got some pretty hyacinths out in our room just now. I wish you could see them. I will tell you a little thing that happened to one of them because it seems to me a sort of parable. It is a white hyacinth, and one day when all the little buds were on the stalk folded tight together, ready to unfold in the sun, the hyacinth glass was put upon the window-ledge, that it might get more light. A little while after I came into the room, and not seeing the flower I opened the window, and in doing so, knocked the top of the hyacinth against the blind and broke off five or six of its buds, and bruised the green leaves. We were so sorry, you cannot think. We said, 'Here is our dear hyacinth quite spoilt; it will never be worth anything now, all one side of the stalk will be bare and ugly, and there will be scarcely any flowers at all. It is hardly worth while to give it fresh water, or put it in the sun. However,' we said, 'it will perhaps turn out better than we think, so we will go on putting it in the sun, and see what will happen.' Shall I tell you what has happened? It is the best of all our hyacinths now. The kind loving light healed the bruised leaves, and

drew one of them close to the stalk so as quite to hide the bare part under a green veil ; then the buds that were left, having plenty of room to grow, got larger and larger, and curled round the stalk and spread into beautiful large white bells, the fairest and sweetest of all our flowers now. Do you want me to explain the meaning of the hyacinth's history to you ? No ! I think you have read already the lesson God has been teaching us in that flower. Is it not that love, which is like sunlight, can heal sin and sorrow ? and that people who have sinned and suffered may become even better, stronger, more beautiful in their souls than even if they had not suffered or done wrong ? That is to say if, like the hyacinth, they turn to God's love and light and let it heal them. I will send you one of our hyacinth bells to keep in your prayer book, and put you in mind of its story.'

Such writing as this is not a mere work of benevolence, it is love which yearns over its object, love which cannot rest until the happiness of those it loves is secured. This is the love which redeems and saves, this is the only love that can help the world.

And the spiritual life of Annie Keary came by very gradual development to this far-seeing and wisely tender love. We have seen how she gained from Professor Maurice and Mr. Kingsley wider views of the love of God, and hope for mankind ; she next gained in fervour and personal devotion by her association with Anglicanism, and one of the most interesting charac-

teristics of her life is the wonderful power of drawing the nutriment needed for development from all sides of thought, until passing out of the limitations of all, she rose to the heights where differences became less visible, and from which she could see all blended, while her own soul breathed a purer and freer air above the mists which are apt to obscure our sight, while we belong merely to a party. 'What Annie was seeking more earnestly than any assertion of doctrine or any definiteness of aim, was to have a clearer vision of Christ : to feel His power in her heart.'

The sermons she heard from a clergyman at the East End of London, a devoted worker amongst the poor of his parish, were very helpful to her at this time, and still more so was the being brought in contact with a band of workers whom he inspired and directed. Annie was taken by the friend mentioned above to visit these Sisters in their Home. 'The first time she went was on Sunday after attending service in the parish church, and on that occasion she and her friend were invited to dine with the Sisters. They were not the only guests ; they sat down to table with a group of the poor neighbours gathered from the back streets, each asked to come on account of some special need ; the aged, the weakly, the destitute, and no distinction was recognised between the different members of the company—rich and poor were all equally welcome. . . . Annie went often to see the Sisters after this. Their work on certain afternoons particularly interested her,

when the poor people of the neighbourhood, men, women, and children, came flocking in for help and counsel and friendly words. She marked the patience and care which the Sisters expended impartially upon them all, the ready unconventional sort of kindness they shewed. A Sister would go out at any moment, when such ministry was needed, and with her own hands make the bed of some sick person, or feed a cripple in his miserable room, or scour down her house for some overworked mother.

‘The life which the Sisters led appeared quite ideal to Annie, and by and by they allowed her to become a lay associate of their community, and help them in their work. The work which she took a small share in, was the care of a hospital for sick children. It was a duty especially congenial to her. The Sisters sought out the saddest and most forlorn cases to help—little deserted children, ill of incurable diseases, some of them loathsome cases, it might be: they despaired of none, they tried to help all.

‘Annie used to take regular days of charge at the hospital, and she never seemed more happy than on those days, setting off to her work generally with a large basket on her arm containing biscuits or toys to distribute, and with the prospect before her of spending a long afternoon with the little sick children.

‘She was often found fault with for being a too indulgent playfellow, and for bringing too many inventions with her to fall in with the routine of the

place, but the children did not love 'Sister Keary,' as they called her, the less on that account, one may feel sure.'

This work was afterwards changed for interest in a Servants' Home, but whatever the work was, Annie Keary's love and devotion always went with it, and touched and quickened the other human hearts with which her own came in contact. As time went on, the honesty of her nature made her give up what she felt cramped her spirit, whilst she retained that which had helped her, and turned eagerly to deeper springs of life and truth which the deepening years and understanding revealed to her thirsting spirit.

A friendship of the kind for which we ever have reason to thank God, helped her life strongly about this time. One who appears in the book under the name of 'Emilia,' is spoken of as Annie Keary's 'nearest spiritual companion' for the rest of her life. 'Emilia's sympathies,' says the writer of the memoir, 'were very wide, and her influence was of that kind which soothes and strengthens. It was not in her nature to attempt to dominate the individuality of another, and she was especially helpful as a friend to Annie on that account.'

This happy friendship was doubtless partly effectual in bringing that clearer light into the life of Annie Keary, which seemed from this time 'to shine more and more to the perfect day.' The time for which her sister says she had longed and waited had come, 'the

full bright dawn in which she saw the face of Christ and knew Him for her Friend.' In writing to Emilia, we find Annie saying, 'It seems such a long time since we saw you, and had our souls refreshed with *the news of God* you always bring us. I know that is an odd phrase to use, but it is just what I mean. I have so often felt that you brought us tidings from the higher sphere which my grovelling soul only reaches to when loved ones can tell me of their own experience, that they have had a glimmer of light coming from thence, or when I can read it in their faces.'

But the light had broadened for her when in 1874 we find her writing of what has 'made her happier than in all her life before.' 'It is a sort of growing clearness in realising that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. I think I have *believed* this all my life, but I have never, so to speak, *known* it. I have always had fears and horrors, and always felt as if I could not trust those I loved best to God, for fear He should not be as indulgent to them as I should like Him to be: but now I feel more as if I had got down to the bottom, and felt the groundwork under our feet, the substance out of which all our existence is woven, and I can feel as I never did before, that there is infinite love all round us, and that joy, and peace, and victory are to be the issues of all struggles—the end that we are *all* to come out into.'

It was this joyous, growing belief which made her so hopeful for everyone whom she had to help, and which

gave all the beauty of the world a new meaning for her. She no longer saw in Nature any mockery of human care and pain. The enigmas of life could be solved for her in those infinite depths which a larger vision brought to her. In one or two winters which she spent among the olive trees of the South of France, her sister says that in all the scenes of beauty which stirred her heart, and brought up the old question how such things could be while human anguish was to be felt, the words which rose to her lips were—‘O Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace.’

‘I know one can go on doing one’s duty thoroughly under clouds of doubt,’ she writes to a girl in America, ‘and even in complete unbelief: there are many who do, and they are dear to God, but the duty is done sadly or deadly, without the spring of life and joy that we are meant to have; that fountain of life and strength is hid in God. Christ showed us the way to it, and we get it into our souls, when we utterly trust him, and give up our hearts, our lives, and our aspirations to Him as to a faithful Creator, who will not leave unsatisfied any of the longings of the souls he has made, who will not let love die, or disappoint finally the cravings for joy, for perfection, for light and knowledge that He has implanted, and that are parts of Him, immortal as He is.’

In another letter she says,—‘I am so sure that God is teaching and leading, even when we seem to be unsuccessful in our search after Him. Joyful certainty

of His inward presence and His personal love, is only another stage of His teaching—a further showing of the gift that is given when the soul first sends out a cry of longing after something higher than itself.’

It was in March, 1878, that her fatal illness first declared itself, and that suffering commenced, which only seemed to draw this life into deeper harmony. She had but a year more to live, but it was a year full of sympathy and tenderness. Watched over unceasingly by her sister and her friend, Emilia, she was moved to Eastbourne, and there her life closed in suffering, which she said, ‘it was worth while to bear to learn God.’

Her wonderful appreciation of James Hinton’s thoughts about pain, which she sent to comfort a fellow-sufferer, shows how she had learnt the secret of selflessness. In writing of his book, ‘The Mystery of Pain,’ she says,—‘His theory was that self-sacrifice is the true law of life for eternity as well as for time, and that we only find it painful here because of imperfection and deadness in ourselves. . . . He thinks that it is only through pain and suffering that progress is made, and that new truths and new blessings are won for the world. We cannot see the connection now between our suffering and any sort of good to any one, for here we only see such a very little bit of the whole. We hardly know that we are part of the whole, and consider each life as a separate thing. But in our spirit-life we shall see the meaning of every pain, we shall see

that no pain was in vain, but that all was being used for bringing in good to the world. . . . It will make you happier next time you are very tired, if you say this pain does not end with me, it is to do good to someone else. 'We know God,' says Hinton 'as the Redeemer of the *world*.' We are glad, not because *we* are well off or good, but because the world is to be saved, and all men are to be made good, and to acknowledge Christ.'

We seem to feel how deeply this loving heart had been taught, when her sister could write of her 'Any life which touched hers in however slight a degree, interested her.' This is specially shown in the novel she wrote during the months of ebbing life, and called 'A Doubting heart,' its rare sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men, and rendering of the pathos which lies behind the roar of the London streets, are some of its most beautiful characteristics. The last chapter of that book was her last earthly work. 'I am going home soon, and I am very happy,' were some of her last words—and as she lay down to that sleep in which her spirit passed away, she said, 'Now I will say a baby hymn:—

"Whether I wake, or whether I sleep,
I give my soul to Christ to keep;
Sleep I now, wake I never—
I give my soul to Christ for ever."

A writer in the *Spectator* has said, in reviewing the memoir from which these extracts are taken, and

which will soothe and gladden every one who reads it, 'This simple history of Annie Keary's uneventful progress through the dusty lanes of life, seems, while we read it, to make the very same lanes less dusty for us who follow,—the familiar hedge-rows greener and sweeter than we have been wont to think them, the blue of heaven intenser, and its grey tenderer than they have ever seemed before—the whole journey a more solemn, and yet a gladder and a sweeter thing. As we close the volume, the life spreads itself before us like a picture, such as William Blake might have painted—the picture of a little procession, with the angels of Faith, and Hope, and Love leading the way for Annie Keary, who holds by one hand a tiny child, and by the other one of the little servant maidens of Bessborough Home, and is followed by a crowd of friends, whose hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows are all her own. Readers of her pleasant novels, and her delightful stories for the children whom she loved, find them full of tender touches and gleams of happy insight, which they would not willingly let slip from grateful recollections; but those who knew her in life, or who learn to know her from these pages, will think of her not as the author of 'Janet's Home' and 'A Doubting Heart,' but as the 'Aunt Annie' of so many nurseries—the 'Sister Keary,' who brought a flush of welcome to pale little faces in the East End Children's Hospital—the woman whose heart was rich enough to meet every claim, not of love only, but of need.'

A WELSH 'REPEATING.'

It was New Year's night, wild and gusty, without moonlight. The 'Repeating' was to take place at Llundale which was two miles away from us; and there was nothing to take us there except a small trap with no lamps, and an old mare which the gaunt Welshman who drove assured us 'knew the way.'

And so we trusted ourselves into the darkness. Dense masses of clouds were rolling over our heads, here and there showing a solitary star through their rifts. Boughs were swaying and tossing in the wind, which, from its low and melancholy wail, seemed impatient even of the slight obstacle which the hedge-rows and scanty groups of fir-trees made to its progress across that high bleak plain.

The old mare and the gaunt driver either knew the way or felt it in a manner truly astonishing to us, and the scattered lights of the little village twinkling out, soon began to make us know that we had reached our destination, and were nearing 'Zion'—the neat little chapel which was to be the scene of the Repeating.

Llundale has no church of its own; if it wants a

Church of England service it must go some miles, and for some time the little rows of white-washed cottages which grew in numbers did not recognise any need in this direction and grew up in dire ignorance and lawlessness.

At length, however, some spark from the Christian revival spread to it and Zion arose, square and uncompromising, whitewashed outside, bluewashed inside, perhaps to be suggestive of 'the little heaven below.'

A 'great work' took place in Llundale which left its results embodied in the rhyme that still hangs about the little village as its legend :

"Llundale, Llundale,
Happy place
Once in sin
But now in grace."

But none of the lights which we saw were Zion's own. Zion stands modestly back from the road, and is reached by a very muddy lane, of course unlighted.

We dismounted in the road, and had wondered how we were to find our own way when the old mare could no longer find it for us. But we need not have doubted, half-a-dozen hands have laid hold of us at once, whose they are we have no idea, but that is of no consequence ; their owners know the way to Zion and we do not, and they know also that its 'main dirrety' and we may sink in the mud if we are left to ourselves, so as we are all brothers and sisters here, we are pulled and guided and supported in triumph to Zion's porch.

The little chapel was full to overflowing—where all the people came from in that scattered district we could hardly imagine, but whole families were gathered and were content to stand where they could not sit, there was barely standing-room for many. There were as many men as women. The public-house must have been forsaken for the landlord was there, so was the sweep of the whole country-side, and the cobbler, the carpenter, the mason, and their wives and little ones, and their children in service had got a holiday, and come home to 'Repeating.'

The men had got themselves into their Sunday best with marvellous neck-cloths and the trimmest of gaiters. The women mostly wore the white frilled cap, broad black straw hat, small plaid shawl and short petticoats which is the modified Welsh costume of the present day. The girls who are in service had introduced a few artificial flowers and feathers, but for the most part the staidness and sobriety of the dress is one of the remarkable features of the scene.

But the faces!—On those who look up from below, and those who look down from the densely packed gallery there is but one expression! Eager, keen expectation and interest. None of the apathy of fashionable audiences is known in Llundale. The reputation of Zion is at stake for the evening, and it behoves all to be anxious about success.

We mount the platform as the invited guests of the white-haired minister, who is Vice-President for the

evening. The son of the neighbouring squire, a young man who loves 'the people' is taking the chair and is known to most around as 'Master Tom.'

On the table stands a glass of water, a jug, and an enormous bouquet of paper flowers of various bright colours. The gallery is festooned thickly with evergreens, chiefly laurel, the broad, glossy leaves catching the light of the many candles with which Zion is illuminated. One or two mottoes on the wall wish us a happy New Year in various sizes of print, and one short text peeps out from a great surrounding of evergreens—'Your heavenly Father knoweth' which seems to have a pathetic significance among all the toil-worn faces around.

And now 'Master Tom's' few opening words are said and the work of the evening begins in earnest. 'The Choir will sing' we are told and the choir come to the front, farm boys, servant girls, and a few labourers, led by the musical genius of the neighbourhood, Reuben Evans. It is a wild, sweet hymn of which the only words that reach us are a refrain about the calm after the storm and the far-off shore. The tune is full of melody and the Welsh voices are for the most part remarkably sweet. The whole performance is peaceful, and hardly prepares us for the fierce theological onslaught which is coming.

After the singing Owen Jones is to 'repeat' and Owen Jones comes forward, a sturdy blue-eyed, shock-headed boy of eight in a belted blouse and large blue-

check collar. He assures his admiring friends and relations, as well as the rest of the neighbourhood, in a high-pitched childish voice and doggrel verse that he was once a child of wrath, a guilty wretch, a very worm, but that through a diligent course of Llundale Sunday School, he is now rejoicing in spirit. He rejoices through eight verses and is loudly applauded as he gets down.

Then follows a 'Dialogue' in which Sarah Jones sets before her erring school-fellow, Mary Lewis, what the sad effects of the desire for a new bonnet may be.

Next the choir sing again led by a young girl who pitches her tune ambitiously and receives a shake from Reuben, and a fervent adjuration 'Not you go so high, Ma'aid.'

The singing is a little less harmonious this time, and Reuben shakes his head sadly, as he returns to his seat. But we are not in a humour to be critical, and everyone is delighted with the infant prodigy, a little fairy child of four-and-a-half who repeats the 103rd Psalm in words which are scarcely yet formed, she follows this up with a poem about her happy home. A proud, ruddy-faced father is waiting to receive her, and she springs from the platform to his open arms and buries her merry little face on his shoulder, surprised and awed at the loud applause which greets her.

And so the entertainment goes on until every child of the Sunday School must have repeated either separately or in a dialogue to the especial delight of its assembled family.

But now the great features of the evening are to be revealed. Two or three deacons give excellent addresses, a little discursive but full of homely advice and friendly jokes and then Reuben is called on to sing a solo.

Reuben is a farm-labourer, a man of about fifty years and son of old Matthew Evans. Matthew is a very remarkable man, he lies dying slowly now, of old age and palsy, in a wretched cottage where a ray of light streams in through the four-paned window right across his noble old silver head which might under favourable conditions have been that of a well-known philosopher.

Few people say deeper or wiser things than Matthew, though he stammers them now. He makes one think of Blake's words :

“ This life's dim window of the soul
Distorts the heavens from pole to pole
And leads you to believe a lie
When you see *with*, not *through* the eye.
That was born in a night to perish in a night
When the soul slept in the beams of light.”

Matthew sees *through* the eye not with it. He knew his Bible both in Welsh and English, and had spelt out some of it in Hebrew. He had the rarest collection of books in his own neighbourhood. He loved Missionary Reports, not for the ordinary reasons but because he said ‘they seemed to make the far places near, and all of us—one.’ He was a great scholar, and knew his books in a wonderful way, handling them tenderly and speaking of them reverently ; but now, even his Bible

is laid aside. 'I love it, I love it' he says dreamily, 'but I do na read it now, it seems to come between God and me—I want naething but God.'

This is Reuben's father, and Reuben has even a dreamier blue eye, and has developed a love for thorough bass. It is the very being of music which is in this man; he plays no instrument, but he can take an oratorio of Handel's and sitting under a hedge he can hear it in his soul as he turns over the pages.

At the cry of 'Reuben to sing' he comes to the front with a conscious look of power, tosses back his shaggy grey hair, and unbuttons his coat, where clasped to his heart there is a well-worn volume. It is 'The Messiah,' and with nervous trembling fingers Reuben turns the pages to find his place. He has got it. He has cleared his throat. He has pitched his note with a tuning-fork. and throwing up his head in the air he begins, 'Every valley shall be exalted.' His quavering voice has not much sweetness left in it, but every note is religiously sung. For a moment or two the crowd listen with an amused and patronising air. Then Reuben comes to a running passage. With a bound he makes for it and enters upon its execution 'Va-a-a-a-lley!'

Then the merriment breaks forth, loud peals of laughter ascend with each ascending note, but Reuben is perfectly oblivious. His wild blue eyes are lifted, and are looking far beyond the crowd to that great Unseen, where the crooked places are made straight,

and where the melody which he is now making in his heart will find its true expression,

"Enough that He heard it once, we shall hear it by-and-bye."

Faithfully he perseveres to the last note, and it is some time before the crowd recovers from its merriment sufficiently to encore him. But Reuben will not be encored. He looks dreamily round at the waiting faces, then shakes his head, and turns to a young girl who is standing by. He has taught her, she shall sing instead of him. 'Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion,' he chooses for her. There is no accompaniment, but Reuben finds the place and gives her the note from his tuning-fork and she begins in a sweet wild warble. Reuben stands by beating time with his hand and moving his lips to the words. She nears the longest run. She grows a little nervous and slurs it. This is too much for her teacher's equanimity, he pulls her arm, 'Nay! nay, Ma'aid, it goes like this' and tossing up his head in the air, he executes the run as before. Every note is rendered faithfully in time at any rate, and again the crowd laugh as though it was done for their amusement, but Reuben gives a satisfied nod as much as to say, 'I have done justice to the thought of my great master, now you may go on.' And the pupil with a good-humoured smile goes over the run again, this time pretty successfully, and sits down amid a storm of applause.

There are some more dialogues and a little domestic

scene of wrangling and peace-making well recited, and then an old man with silver hair and beard, and a face that might have belonged to a Welsh bard of old days, stands up, and after blessing the people gathered together, begins to sing in a sweet quavering voice. It is a Welsh hymn set to a wild tune which seemed to have gathered into itself some of the sound we had heard among the fir-trees, and of the sea running up into the deep chasms of that rocky coast. The people are spell-bound now. There is perfect quiet except for an occasional groan or sigh. The old white-haired minister keeps time to the tune with his hands and when we ask him what the words are, he answers, only 'about the sea of crystal.'

It was a strange wandering tune, full of unexpected wailing minor tones, and then again merging into a peaceful melody with which it ended. There was a fascination in it. Perhaps it came from the thought that in some mysterious way the wildness, and the discords and the wailing found their way into harmony at last, in the image of that mystic sea, across which the true music may some day be wafted to us, when we have ears to hear it. A few words more and the old minister receives his New Year's gifts from the people who love him, and lifts up his hand to give the blessing with which he has blessed them for so many years. And we find our way out into the dark night and are helped in the same kindly fashion till we reach our carriage, and then amid many kindly good-nights and blessings drive home under the swaying boughs and the drifting clouds, and the 'same bright patient stars.'

THE SEA-POOL.

It lay all round a sea-worn rock, that pleasant sunlit water—clear as crystal, with the blue sky reflected in it. The beautiful sea-weeds threw out their long fronds in it; the bright sea-creatures revelled in it, clinging to the rock, and stretching out their many mouths to drink. The breeze blew over it, and curled its surface into tiny ripples, and little human feet waded into it. What could be more glad than that wondrous seapool? All day giving life and joy—all day reflecting the heaven above it. And for hours as it lay in the leagues of broad sand, it was full of gladness. It was full, it was joy-giving, it was content.

But there came a change. A far-off sound began to trouble that bright water, a distant sound that thrilled to its calm depths, and moved them, not with fear, but with solemn awe, and yearning gladness. Far, far away it seemed, and yet coming nearer. Far away, and yet part of its very self. ‘Are you not content?’ said the rock. ‘Why are you listening, listening; am not I enough for you?’

‘No ! no ! I thought you were until now, but there is something that is more to me. I hear it drawing near.’

‘Do not leave us, bright water, for who will feed us if you go ?’ sighed the beautiful sea-creatures about him.

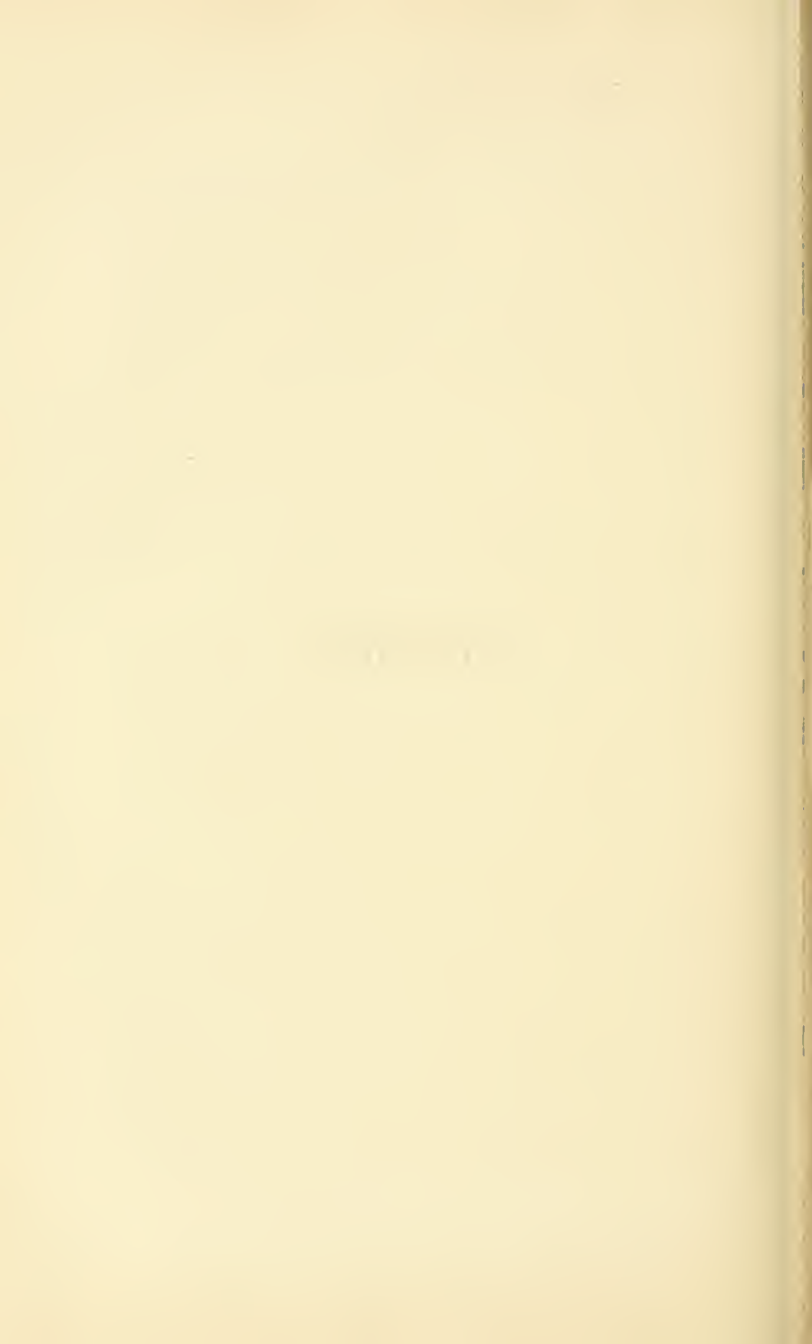
‘That which feeds me will feed you, dear ones, don’t be afraid. It is Love which comes. I am not enough for you.’

‘But you are full of Heaven ; in all your surface it is reflected.’

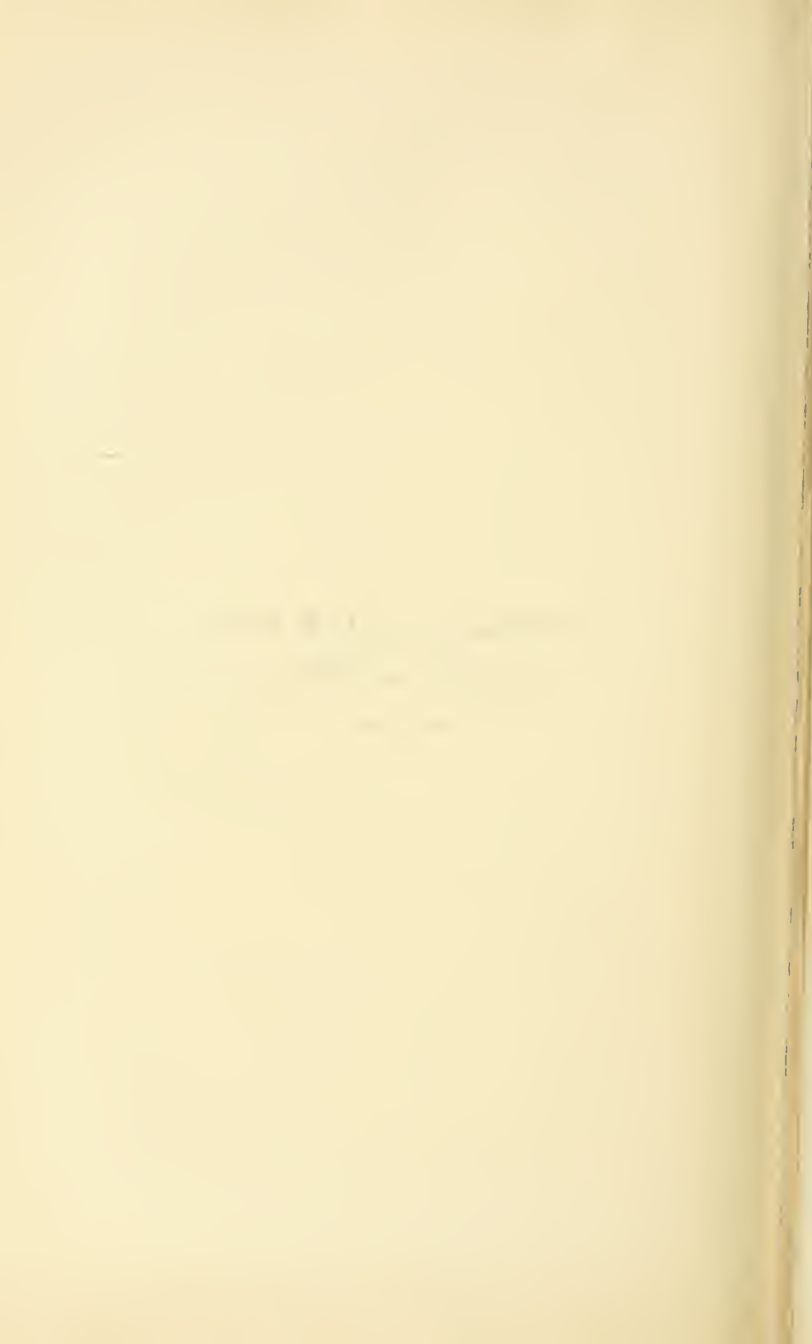
‘I must be made more, that I may hold more of it. I must be one with the depths themselves. It is me, and I am it. Do not hold me from my own.’

And the glorious sound came nearer.

It was a moment of exquisite and solemn gladness, as the great tide swept over the rock, and in the next it had drawn the sea-pool into its bosom for ever.



VERSES.



EARLY POEMS.

Reprinted from "Trefoil."

HERE WE LEFT OFF.

It was here we stopped, and here is the mark
You placed in the book when the room grew dark ;
Seven years ago, and still it is here :
We never have finished that poem, dear.

You promised me then, when I went away,
You would finish it to me another day ;
But I think you forgot it with all the rest—
That I had forgotten it too were best.

You had read my story of life in part,
And you placed your mark in my quiet heart ;
'I can finish it by-and-by,' you said,
And my heart and the poem are still unread.

QUIET.

When the world is hot and dusty,
On the fiercest summer day ;
When the autumn fogs are rising,
And my life is cold and grey ;
I will think of a quiet evening,
In a far-off month of May.

I will live it again in dreaming,
And this shall my dreaming be,
A rock, and a lazy murmur
From a slowly rippling sea ;
A gleam on a white-sailed vessel,
And a voice that speaks to me.

And the spell of that quiet evening
Will come from the far-off years,
Will come in its beauty and stillness,
To comfort my falling tears ;
For I hold that the Past is dearer
Than a Future of hopes and fears.

The Past will be mine for ever,
Let the Future be what it may,
I will guard it as sacred treasure,
Which no one can take away ;
The voice and the rippling murmur,
And the rock in the quiet bay.

LOVE AT FORTY.

I have loved you, little Minnie, loved you long and well,
 More than you ever dreamed of, more than I care to tell ;
 Since the day when first I met you at the party in the
 glen ;

And the joy had never faded which broke in upon me
 then.

Never faded till this morning !—and now is vanished all ;
 For I heard what you were saying to my brother in the
 hall.

'Tis well that I know it, Minnie ; would I had known
 it before ;

 could have spared you much of pain, and left my
 heart less sore.

I might have known it truly, but I was too blind to see.
 How could I dream that knowing George, you still
 would care for me ?

He is so young and so merry, I am so old and grave ;
 I was young in one thing, Minnie, young in the love I
 gave.

I could have made you happy, at least I had fancied so.
 But no ! you have never loved me : it is well I should
 let you go.

Give me back the ring that I gave you ; here is your
 lock of hair :

I have kept it near my heart, and now perhaps George
 will keep it there.

Angry? I am not angry, dear ; I could not be so with you.

Look in my face, little Minnie : you know what I say is true.

I have loved you too well and deeply to desire further than this,

That you should be perfectly happy, though I may not share your bliss.

I see you are sorry for me, there are tears in those blue eyes :

George must dry them when I've left him in possession of his prize.

May God in heaven bless you ! I pray that He ever will,
As for me—I have been lonely, and I must be lonely still.

IN PACE.

Peace! he has done with the fretting
 Which we on the earth call woe,
 Peace! for his soul is forgetting
 The sorrowful tale we know.
 God have him in faithful keeping,
 And while the long years increase,
 God give him in quiet sleeping
 His holiest gift of Peace.

Peace—from each feverish yearning,
 Peace—from the sharpness of pain,
 Peace—which will baffle the learning
 Of us who in life remain.
 Peace—from the terror of living,
 In Death, where all terrors cease,
 Peace from each doubt and misgiving;
 For ever and ever—Peace!

REFUSED.

Not yours the fault, you say. Not yours ?
 You women keep some bitter cures
 For our proud spirits. How I long
 To think you have not done me wrong !
 Believe me, this is half my pain,
 To feel I may not give again
 Respect and trust which were your due,
 When I believed you wholly true.

The words of love you said one day,
 You meant the next day to unsay ;
 And if I thought of them, what then ?
 I must be fooled like other men,
 Must learn to woo is not to win,
 That women's falsehoods are not sin ;
 Must bear what other hearts have borne.
 I give you, lady, scorn for scorn.

It was for love I vainly sued,
 It was a woman that I wooed—
 Not something in a woman's guise,
 To make my trusting heart a prize ;
 Rejoice to feel me in her power,
 Play with her new toy for an hour,
 Then throw it down with cruel jest
 And mocking scorn, for my request !

No ! it was something kind and true
I fancied that I saw in you.
Before a high ideal shrine
I laid this honest love of mine.
I wake to find it all a dream,
That maidens are not what they seem.
Henceforth, I too will share their mirth,
And take their love for what it's worth.

THE OLD MAID'S REVERIE.

I wish I could get my knitting right !
 I'm sure it is freezing hard to-night !
 Yes, Pussy dear, we are growing old,
 And I think we begin to feel the cold.
 A few stitches more—one, two, three, four.
 There is the postman again next door !

How often he goes there—I wonder why ?
 I'm sure there's some little mystery.
 I fancy that bright-faced girl could tell,
 For she knows the quick rat-tat so well :
 And some fine day she will go away
 To brighten somebody's home, I say. }

I wonder where all my brothers can be :
 It is long, indeed, since they wrôte to me.
 I wonder how Caroline's boy has grown.
 Ah me ! it is sad to be left alone !
 Yes, Puss, I will try to keep down that sigh ;
 But I'm thinking of days that have long gone by :

Thinking I was not so wondrous wise,
As seemed to my own short-seeing eyes ;
Thinking I need not be lonely now,
Cherishing feebly a foolish vow,
If I could but undo a stitch or two,
And alter the work of a life all through.

I stood with shut hand and averted eye,
While God's best blessings were passing by ;
I grasped at the shadows and dreams of life ;
I wearied my heart in the fruitless strife.
The dreams are flown, I am left alone,
With nothing on earth I can call my own.

I am not unhappy, Puss, you know :
I had done with unhappiness long ago.
The turf on the grave of my hope is green ;
And nothing can be as it once has been,
But the fire is bright, and my heart is light ;
And all that is wrong will be soon set right.

REAPING.

'As the servant earnestly desireth the shadow.'—JOB vii, 2.

The harvest is lying golden, in the heat of the summer sun ;

The reapers are binding the corn-sheaves, and wishing their work was done ;

Through the glare of the scorching noontide they will reap with what strength they may,

But they long with an earnest desire for the shadowy close of day.

They were hired at early morning, when courage and hope were strong ;

They will labour on till the twilight ; but the hours are hot and long :

For the brave, willing hearts are tired, and toil-worn the reaper's hands ;

And the gleaners follow wearily, through all the harvest lands.

But the Master will come in the gloaming, when all the reaping is done ;

He will walk through the quiet corn-fields, and speak to each weary one ;

They will tell Him the long day's story : but their labour will seem to them nought,

For the sake of the joy and gladness which the sight of His face has brought.

QUESTIONING.

Is Doubt as sad as Faith,
When Faith is blind?
Better to doubt of all,
Than wake to find
Our faith is false, when life
Is left behind.

Is Grief as sad as Hope
When Hope is vain?
All joy too long delayed
Will turn to pain.
Better through years to grieve
Than hope again.

Is Death as sad as Life?
Soon we shall know.
It does not seem to me
They find it so
Who die, and going from us,
Smile as they go.

POST TENEBRAS LUX.

Lighten the darkness of our life's long night,
 Though which we blindly stumble to the day.
 Shadows mislead us: Father, send Thy light
 To set our footsteps in the homeward way.

Lighten the darkness every human creed
 Has gathered round the truth which came from Thee :
 For human teaching fails us at our need,
 And hides the light it fain would make us see.

Lighten the darkness of our self-conceit—
 The subtle darkness that we love so well,
 Which shrouds the path of wisdom from our feet,
 And lulls our spirits with its baneful spell.

Lighten our darkness when we bow the knee
 To all the gods we ignorantly make
 And worship, dreaming that we worship Thee,
 Till clearer light our slumbering souls awake.

Lighten our darkness when we fail at last,
 And in the midnight lay us down to die.
 We trust to find Thee when the night is past,
 And daylight breaks across the morning sky.

LATER POEMS.

MORBEGNO.

There is a long straight road in Lombardy
Bordered with stunted trees, and maize, and vines,
And at its side the stealthy Adda slides,
Spreading the poison of its humid breath ;
While dismal mists like wandering spectres steal
From rush-grown marshes and from osier beds,
And lay their cruel hands on human life,
Strangling its joy with clutch of fell disease.
We travelled on this road one summer day,
And at Morbegno rested for an hour ;
The deadly mists hung close around the town,
The faded town, with houses gaunt and old,
And frescoes peeling from the mildewed walls,
And trouble-smitten people in the streets.
I see them still—those piteous haunting eyes
That gaze out wistfully from life-long woe,
The vacant smile, the sad distorted face,
The wrinkled skin, the aimless feeble hands.
And through the mists there came a sound of bells,
In chimes that still had sweetness of their own,
But yet had lost the clue which guided them,
And had forgotten what they used to say.
Oh sweet sad bells ! oh never-ended chime !
My voice went forth to GOD with those wild notes,

“Hast Thou, indeed, made all men here for nought ?
Did they not cry aloud these souls of Thine
Whom Thou hast formed to suffer till they die ?
What have they done, these weary stricken ones,
That age to age should hand their misery down,
One generation sending on Thy curse
To that which follows in its hopeless track ?
I call Thee Father, and in Thy great name
Thy Spirit binds to mine in bonds of love
All human beings on this world of Thine ;
Brothers and sisters Thou hast made us, Lord.
I cannot bear the woe of these I love,
Let me but suffer for them. Oh, my God,
Gather Thy wrath, Thy vengeance in one cup,
And pour it out on me, but give them joy.
Of old “it was expedient one should die,
And that all should not perish !” Let it be
Thy will once more, and bid the plague be stayed.
See, in their misery they kneel to Thee,
These men and women who must bear Thy curse,
See how they gather round the wayside shrine
And lift their weary hands to Him who hangs
Upon the Cross, and comforts human hearts
By having known the worst of human pain.
The ‘Man of Sorrows’ is their only God ;
What should they know of One who reigns alone
Above all suffering and human want,
In endless plentitude of joy unknown
To them by anything which life can show ?”

Such my wild prayer, and in my soul I heard
An answer wrought of pain and faith and hope.
"Oh foolish human heart that wrongest Me,
How long shall I bear with you, yea, how long,
Suffer you still to take My name in vain?
How can those half-blind eyes that scan the gloom
See anything aright of all My work,
And seeing not, why judge Me in the dark?
Perchance some day the clearer light will show
That pain, disease, and grief are gifts as great
As strength and health and joy, which seem so dear.
Perchance some day in gazing back on life,
From some high standing-place much further on,
Your soul will give its verdict! 'Even this,
This place of doom in all its dreariness
Was nearer to the blessed light of God,
Than I who pitied, and who prayed for it,'—
And you shall envy those who suffered here,
Who worked God's will through loathsome disease,
And helped the world's redemption by their pain."
I bowed my head, my heart was humbled now.
'Father, forgive me. Like Morbegno's bells
The ending of my cry is lost in doubt,
Accept once more that plea made long ago
By One who trusted Thee. Oh, not alone
For those He saw, Christ prayed His latest prayer,
We know not what we do, or say, or think.
Father, forgive us. Let Thy will be done.'—
And if it be that human misery

Is working out God's will, ye suffering ones,
Bear on through all things, for your rich reward
Is greater than our human hearts can grasp,
Is deeper than our finite souls can reach.
Oh weary men, your pain is dear to God ;
Oh women who must bring your children forth
Knowing them born to lives of misery,
Take comfort, the Eternal Will is sweet,
And ye are working out its large behest
Though life is bitter. Children, with those eyes
So full of sorrow, and of coming doom,
Our Father loves you, and the end is great
Though hidden far away from human sight.
Brothers and sisters, I could almost think
I hear the secret told which no man knows,
When I recall those patient weary eyes,
That gaze out wistfully on life-long woe.
And God stays in Morbegno till the end,
While we pass on to Como and forget.

ASCENDING.

" 'Who shall ascend ? ' We vainly look around
 In hope to see men scale the mist-wrapt height.
 With dim eyes, fixed upon the lowland ground,
 They journey through the doubtful shades of night ;
 Clouds hide the summit where the Master went,
 Clouds hide the end to which we feebly press,
 And, looming through the soul's discouragement,
 We see but shadows of our worthlessness.

' Who shall ascend ? ' At best we seem to grope
 Through endless labyrinths of thought and pain,
 And unbelief has dug a grave for hope,
 And whispers that our tears for her are vain.
 We cry to one another through the gloom,
 And stretch vain hands to find a kindred hand ;
 Death seems no more a summons, but a doom
 Which waits us in a terror-stricken land.

' Who shall ascend ? '—While all around we see
 The burning wrongs and sorrows of the earth ?
 We cannot set our burdened brothers free
 To rise to God through human sin and dearth !
 ' Who shall ascend ? ' our love cries restlessly,
 For others' needs are sorer than our own ;
 We can but linger by their sides and die ;
 'Twere worse than hell to rise to heaven alone.

'Who shall ascend?'—We pace with weary feet
Our life-long path of petty toil and care ;
A path that still leads on, where most paths meet,
And yet we know not whence it leads, nor where !"
My wail rang out upon the midnight sky,
And short and quick I drew my labouring breath.
All things seem harder when we come to die :
Perchance this struggling weariness means death ?

* * * *

Was it a dream, that in the throbbing east
One primrose rift had rent the storm-dark blue,
And grew to glory as the throbs increased,
Till daylight at the golden door broke through !
And I was toiling up a sun-lit hill,
Where some strong hand had led me in the night ?
My steps were guided by some hidden will,
And I was climbing towards a world of light.

Yet O !—more sweet than beauty which I saw,
Through all the years there came the Master's voice—
'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw
All men to me, and make the world rejoice.'
He shall ascend who loves with truest love,
Leaving all paths for that which Christ has trod ;
For he who lifts his brother's soul above
Stands, even now, upon the hill of God.

THE CHILDREN'S MUSIC.

We asked where the magic came from
 That made her so wondrous fair,
 As she stood with the sunlight flashing
 On her glory of golden hair.
 And her blue eyes looked towards heaven
 As though they could see God there.
 'Hush !' said the child, 'can't you hear it
 The music that's everywhere ?'

God help us, we could not hear it,
 Our hearts were heavy with pain,
 We heard men toiling and wrangling,
 We heard the whole world complain.
 And the sound of a mocking laughter
 We heard again and again ;
 But we lost all faith in the music,
 We had listened so long in vain.

'Can't you hear it ?' the young child whispered,
 And sadly we answered, "No.
 We might have fancied we heard it
 In the days of long ago,
 But the music is all a delusion,
 Our reason has told us so.
 And you will forget that you heard it
 When you know the sound of woe."

Then one spoke out from among us
Who had nothing left to fear,
Who had given his life for others
And been repaid with a sneer,
And his face was lit with a glory,
And his voice was calm and clear
As he said ' I can hear the music
Which the little children hear.'

TWO RIVERS.

I.

A torrent rushing wildly
Where the black rocks shut it in,
Like a life that is shadowed with sorrow,
And is struggling in vain with sin.
Sweeping in madness downwards
With a roar of anguished woe,
Through the gloomy chasm of darkness
To the darker abyss below.

Not a ray to lighten its terror,
Not a star to shine on its pain,
Only a fate relentless
Which it battles against in vain.
Hopeless and helpless with sorrow
It can see no end to its strife,
And I fling my heart on its waters
For their moan is the moan of life.

II.

Yet I remember a river
Which flows through a quiet land,
And peaceful homes, and drooping trees
By that peaceful river stand.
A river which flows so calmly
That the flowers are mirrored there,
And the stars look down to their shadows
Which the silvered waters bear.

And the children's happy voices
Blend with the flowing stream,
Till life is no longer fearful,
And death is a peaceful dream.
There is a rest which remaineth,
And in patience I bow my head
When I think of the quiet river,
And remember the quiet dead.

POSSIBILITIES.

It was only a woodland pathway
In a painted view,
A place where the trees arched over
And the primrose grew.

The sunlight gleamed through the branches
On the Spring's fresh green,
And the distance faded in beauty,
With the end unseen.

You may not know where it leads to,
You may never know,
But it makes you think of all places
Where the flowers grow.

And your spirit goes on that pathway
To a fairy land,
You are beckoned on to the distance
By some hidden hand.

The possible beauty that waits us
Will be always sweet,
And the truest joys we ever find
Are the incomplete.

‘THE RETURN OF THE DOVE.’

BY G. F. WATTS R.A. ROYAL ACADEMY, 1869.

Only a waste of waters,
 Only a tideless sea,
 Which is not life, which is not death,
 But death in life to me.

Only the years on-coming
 Rolling their silent waves,
 Over the bye-gone trouble,
 Over life's hidden graves.

Only a drear out-looking
 For a hope that is long delayed,
 And a weariful prayer for patience,
 And a wish that may not be prayed.

Why am I ever watching?
 What can I ever see?—
 Only a dove that is coming
 From a far-off land to me.’

Only a branch it is bringing
 Which tells of a clearer day,
 And bears me a promise of peace and life
 When the waters have passed away.

A SPRING SONG.

With strong new life the gladdened Earth is teeming,
 The budding trees have waked from winter's dreaming,
 Death and despair the Sun has captive led.
 Life everywhere!—A joyous life is springing,
 Life everywhere!—The happy birds are singing,
 And men alone are sleeping with the dead.

These too would joy if men were truly living,
 These too would praise the Giver for His giving,
 Not only fill the air with plaints of pain :
 Nor stand with empty hands amid the gladness,
 Nor mar the song of Nature with their sadness,
 Nor walk alone disquieted in vain.

O Perfect world of Love, so rich in beauty !
 O Perfect world of Law, so glad in duty,
 Content to pass to higher life through death !
 Spring's mystery in man is also hidden,
 He too shall rise to newer life, when bidden,
 He too shall feel the kindling of God's breath.

THE BOY MUSICIAN.

All day I questioned bitterly of death,
 Striving to wring the secret from its pain ;
 Is all hope past with passing human breath ?
 Are human lives but lived and lost in vain ?

There came no answer from the old grey town,
 No answer from the river's murmured song ;
 The ruined castle only seemed to frown
 As though my sadness did the silence wrong.

And tender sunset colours came and went
 Over the ruin and the land below,
 Kindling their greyness to a wonderment
 Of rosy glory and of golden glow.

But I was left alone. No sunset light
 Fell on my sorrow, and no answering word
 Came to my heart—but dark and starless night
 Which echoed back the prayer of day unheard.

And then you came, dear child, with holy eyes,
 And spoke in music what you could not know,
 And all my heart rose up in quick surprise
 To feel that music's sympathy with woe.

Was it some grand old master's soul again
That lived unconsciously in what you played?
You could not know the mysteries of pain
I felt were in the music which you made.

Perchance in harmonies of life and breath
And in the chords and discords of our lot,
Yea—in that wondrous minor key of death
We make God's music, understanding not.

VIOLIN MUSIC.

Is it that Nature draws a well-strung bow
O'er all the human hearts whose quivering strings
Lie on her breast, and for an answer brings
A cry of passion vaster than we know,
An endless vibrating of love and woe?
Is it the gathered sadness of the sea,
Or all the wind says in its agony?
Is it the tread of men who feel they go
To certain death? Yes! all of these and more.
Beyond the anguish of the wound, the balm;
Beyond the maddened waves, the quiet shore;
Beyond the sweeping storms, the depths of calm;
Hid in that music's resonant refrain
Lie joy and victory beyond all pain.

SANDOWN BAY.

Oh ! the summer sunshine
 Lighting all the bay,
 Making gladness gladder
 Whilst the children play.
 They are building mountains,
 They are digging lakes,
 Leaving large things dearer
 For the small things' sakes.

Great waves, grey and curling,
 Foam in freshening spray,
 God's mysterious music
 Mingling in their play ;
 Rippling baby chatter !
 Sunny baby wiles !—
 Heaven keeps the secret
 Of the children's smiles.

All the glad sea's glory
 Dimly stretched away,
 Like that unknown story
 They shall know some day.
 In God's endless anthem
 Sung by earth and seas
 Are there notes of laughter
 Sounding on the breeze ?

MAY-TIME IN WITHYBUSH WOODS.

Enough, Great Father, all our hearts are filled,
 Our inmost being with Thy beauty thrilled—
 The overflow of song, the life that teems,
 The clouds that float athwart the blue like dreams,
 The trees that seem to laugh themselves to leaf,
 In banishment of winter's gloom and grief.
 The swaying boughs of green, the quivering air,
 The wealth of golden flowers everywhere,
 The mystic hum of unseen life we hear,
 The Eternal Presence ever brooding near.
 We have not room or grasp for more than this,
 Even the half of all there *is*, we miss.

Our hearts are full ; these shallow hearts too soon
 Fail in receiving such a royal boon.
 With all our petty wants and cares we fill
 The space that should be Thine, and then the thrill
 Of this Thy beauty comes to half-closed eyes
 With something of a dimly felt surprise.
 Had we but Nature's calm within our breast,
 Could we but enter into Love's true rest,
 Life would be Beauty, and all Beauty, Life—
 Our wills and Thine no longer be at strife,
 But larger hearts would grow from clearer sight,
 And we should read Spring's secret in Thy light..

TO A FACE IN THE STREET.

For all your sorrow which I may not touch
I send my soul this night to comfort you.
Yes! through the darkness I will speak to you,
To you unknown as you must ever be—
What forged the cruel chains which bind us fast,
That I whose gaze met yours, and read in it
The anguish of your heart, must pass you by
And dare not offer help? Could you not feel
That some love touched you, which you had not known
Then, when I met the trouble of your eyes?
Were not the frozen springs about your heart
Stirred passingly from some long ice-bound sleep
As I said silently "God pity thee?"
Look, tired soul, I stretch my arms to you,
Come near and rest, for I too have known pain.
By those worn lips, set sternly in their grief,
Those dear sad lips, which lock your secret in,
By those bewildered, joy-forsaken eyes
Which seem to look to God with wild dismay,
By all your strength or weakness, good or ill—
By all the changes which your life has held—
By all the gladness of its gladder days—
By all the darkness which enfolds it now—
I claim my right to love and grieve for you.

THE "GLORIA IN EXCELSIS" OF MOZART.

Like some young child, who, wandering from his home
 With weary footsteps can no longer roam,
 But lying down within the quiet fields
 Drops from his hands the flowers they hold, and yields
 His tired limbs to peaceful sleep awhile,
 Saying as o'er his face there breaks a smile,
 "I am at home, my mother sings to me"—
 Then wakes to hear a song-bird on the tree,
 And find his home still very far away—
 I, who was weary with life-wanderings, lay
 Sleeping and dreaming like a tired child,
 And soothed by music from across the wild,
 'The echo of the angels' song on high,
 The "Gloria in Excelsis" of the sky.

O, far sweet music! It was hard to wake
 And find you but a dream, again to take
 Through chill and darkness of the silent night
 The road which led across the hills to light;
 And hard it was to hear you fade away,
 And know the Heaven-sent minstrels would not stay
 To cheer me on through all the sounds of strife,
 And all the discords of my broken life.
 Yet earth has music, though the voice of pain,
 'The moans of anguish, and the longings vain,

The lonely wail, the orphan's bitter cry,
 Rise in confusion to the quiet sky.
 Above them all there comes the forest breeze,
 There comes the cadence of the rolling seas.
 There comes the voice of men whose ears have caught
 And mingled in their harmonies some thought
 Of far-off music—Blending with the cries
 Of human grief and suffering, still shall rise,
 Softening the tumult of our grief and mirth,
 The 'Gloria in Excelsis' of the earth.

And, soul, is there no music for thine ear ?
 Stoop down, and listen quietly to hear
 The melody of life. Can no loved voice
 In all Earth's brotherhood bid thee rejoice ?
 Is there no strain of triumph in the fight ?
 Is there no strong voice pleading for the right ?
 If all of these can bring one joyous thrill,
 Then thou art hearing heavenly music still.
 Let thy voice add its notes ! Hast thou no word
 Of kindly comfort ? Hast thou ever heard
 The poor, the weary, pray to God to bless
 The voice that speaks to them in tenderness ?
 If thou hast any hope or help to give,
 Rejoice to give it—and be glad to live !
 For in each low-toned blessing there will be
 A note of Heaven's music breathed for thee,
 The song which echoes far beyond the strife—
 The 'Gloria in Excelsis' of thy life.

SAINT GOVAN'S.

An ever-moaning sea, a cold grey shore,
 Wild cliffs, wave-beaten into rugged form ;
 Dim caves, through which the seething waters roar,
 And bleak rocks washed by every wintry storm ;
 All desolate, as if they might not share
 Mercy from God, or love from mortal men.
 Sea-maddened winds cry ever fiercely there,
 And sea-birds' voices answer back again.
 Yet here, mid-way upon the cliff's rough face,
 A ruined chapel stands above the sea,
 As though one man had sought the saddest place
 Through all Thy world, O God ! to worship Thee :
 And I am taught, life holds no dreariness
 Which Thy loved presence cannot change, or bless.

TO ONE WHO MADE MUSIC.

You built a palace of ascending strains,
And harmony was floating through its walls,
And breathing from its widely opened door,
And there I wandered lost in joyous dreams.
All wild unrest was stilled, all sorrow calmed,
Then life and death had mingled into one
Far stretching peace, that lulled me in its arms.
It laid a tender hand upon mine eyes,
To hide the pain and anguish of the world.
Then suddenly, your palace fell to earth
With crashing discord—Ah ! one could have wept
For all that beauty gone for evermore !
The calm cool corridors, the vast arched halls,
The peace and splendour, and the streaming light ;
All ruins now, and all the glory gone,
While I was driven out into the storm.
But slowly, through the ruins, came again
Soft notes of hope, which sounded as a voice,
Low breathing of a future lit with love.
Not now—it whispered—wait in trust awhile.
Life's pain, death's doubt, and all lost lovely things,
Are discords in God's music ; therefore wait :
And He will bring the harmony at last.—
You broke off there, the rest will not be played,
Until the Master-hand has found the chords
In all the human hearts His music needs.

BROAD HAVEN.

The bright broad haven calm before us lies,
Calm, save for rippling waves that fringe the bay ;
And noonday mist has hidden from our eyes
The dim blue headlands stretching far away.

Dimmer than that mysterious shroud of mist
Is all our knowledge of another life,
Deeper than deepest sea-depths we have wist
Is this life's mystery of dying strife.

Suddenly, sunset light upon the sea
Shows us a land, which noonday had not shown,
Shines on a haven where we fain would be,
And we are trustful for the vast unknown,

TO A WHITE FLOWER BY THE SEA.

In life I have seen some who walked apart,
Impenetrable quiet guards their lot ;
Spared by great sorrow, by great joy forgot,
Reaping an endless calm within the heart ;
Spirits that have not known the goading smart
Of pain, that drives men on to seek a rest
Deeper than that which dwells within the breast ;
That chance has sheltered from grief's hurting dart.
I have seen others perish, and go down
In sudden shipwreck, when their hopes are crossed,
Hearts which have broken under Fortune's frown,
In darkness hidden, and in tempest tossed.
Brave flower, I have known but few like thee
Draw strength and beauty from life's stormy sea.

TO EMELIA.

Friend ! I think God has sent you. O'er a sea,
Whose moonlit waters broke upon a waste
Of shifting sand, I dreamed you came to me
With swift light footsteps, and your hand was placed
One moment on my eyes before you said,
'These sinking sands can never lead you *there*,
Into the silver path the Light has made.'
Then I, whose heart was overborne with care,
For answer only knelt upon the shore
And cried, 'I toil in slowly dwindling hope
To find firm foot-hold, praying evermore
For power with the coming dark to cope.'
'Quit the drear shore,' you said, 'and dare the deep,
Plunge boldly in, for Love its own will keep.'

My child went forth into my garden fair
 Having no wish or will to stay by me ;
 But that I patiently had followed him out there
 He could not see.

He passed on from the garden to the wild
 Where cruel and fierce-roaring monsters lie ;
 I drove them back, but nothing told the child
 That it was I.

He saw his brothers toiling on the road,
 'I will give life and strength for them' cried he ;
 But that I made him strong to lift their load
 He did not see.

Soul-thrilling words of love bade him rejoice,
 And filled with music all that desert place ;
 And yet he never knew it was my voice,
 Nor saw my face.

And when the night came and his eyes grew dim,
 And dark and chill the mists about him lay,
 He did not know my hand was guiding him
 Till it was day.

THE FLIGHT OF SOULS.

INFERNO. CANTO V. 45.

I dreamed of midnight skies with drifting clouds
 Above the mist-wrapped earth, and moonless sea—
 And in the visions of the night I saw
 Like flights of birds, which seek a foreign shore
 The saints who went to bliss, and those—the rest
 Whom men call *lost*, forgetting it is God
 Who is the Loser, and will find them yet.

And thus I saw them—rows on rows of saints,
 Sweet sacred faces, pure and free from care,
 With floating robes of white, that touched not earth,
 With clean hands folded in unending prayer,
 With voices clear and birdlike, praising God.
 They seemed to fly straight home to certain joy,
 But all about their track across the sky
 The air was broken with the wavering flight
 Of darker forms, which could not find their way—
 Fain would they follow where the white robed flew
 But heavier vesture drew them earthward still,
 And stained and weighted with defiling clay
 They wrung their sin-soiled hands. Then thro' the sky
 Their voices broke in questioning despair
 Like tired children who have missed their road,

And find themselves at midnight far from home.
'Sweet saints, have pity,' cry the weary ones,
'The night is dark and no star shines for us,
The wind across the wold blows chill and keen,
The wind above the sea blows fiercer still.
Where is God's heaven? We have lost his earth
And perish seeking for some home of rest.'
But they, the white-robed, clasped their hands in prayer,
And drew their shining vesture round them close
Lest any touch of long-forsaken earth
Should soil them now. While louder rose their hymns
Above the bitter cries, 'In life, in death
Keep thou our souls from all defilement Lord—
Put Thy right hand upon these eyes of ours,
And blind us to the hateful sins which fill
Thine earth with anguish, and thy hell with souls.'
'Sweet saints, we perish!' once again the cry
Breaks on the midnight air, with sharper note,
And echoes from the rocks upon the shore,
Echoes from reedy pools upon the moor,
And tangled forest growth across the hills.
'God's will be done' sang loud the white-robed band,
And held serenely on their heavenward way.

A LITTLE HAND.

Yes, mates, you shall hear, if you care to know,
What has made me sober, and keeps me so.
It's not a tale that I often tell ;
It's but seldom I mention my little Nell.

But somehow, to-day, in the bright sunshine,
As we sit on the bank of the new-cut line,
It seems as if Nell were not far away :
And it's most about her what I've got to say.

Well, wife had been dead a year or more.
A good wife? No! she had plagued me sore,
And the sound of her scolding tongue, I think,
Was what chiefly made me take to the drink.

But, there, I'm a brute to speak like that
When a woman is dead and gone, that's flat !
A man's always making excuses, too,—
As Adam did once, his sons still do.

The wife was dead then, and poor little Nell—
Who had struggled about with flowers to sell—
Grew suddenly wise and woman-like,
And minded the house for me and Mike.

Mike's my one kid now, a good enough lad,
Who gets on prime with his poor old dad ;
But look you, mates,— though I'm 'shamed to tell,—
I'd give twenty Mikes for one word from Nell !

I see her now with her grave child face
A sweeping and dusting our poor old place,
With a worn little stump of a broom she'd got,
And her hair bound up in a shining knot.

I can see her now, and GOD help me, friends !
I think I shall see her till this life ends ;—
I would gladly give up what's left to stand
Where she could reach with her little hand.

'Twas that hand that did it—this was the way :—
As sure as there came round Saturday,
So sure did I take my weekly pay
To the public, where most of it slipped away.

Though Nell and Mike were in rags, you know,
Though I knew it was my fault they were so,
I wasn't enough of a man to pass
That door without taking ' just one glass.'

Just one glass ! Of course, 'twas a dozen more like.
What chance was there then for Nell and Mike ?
They shivered and starved, but they said no word
Unless it was some that the angels heard.

But hark ye ! every Saturday night,
Just under the gas-lamp's flaring light,
Outside the public, there would stand
Poor little Nell, with an outstretched hand,

And when I came staggering out, that child
Would put her small hand into mine, and mild
And sweet, she would lovingly say,
' Come along, dada, home's this way.'

And so, week by week, she took me home,
Till the year went by, and the winter come :
And then for fresh work I had to seek,
And at last I got some away for a week.

But when the Saturday night came round,
By the usual habit I felt bound
To go to the public with what I had earned :
Aye, that winter night was my lesson learned !

For when I came out, no Nell was there,—
I called her name through the rainy air :—
I was used to her little hand you see,
And I couldn't think what had come to me.

I stumbled home somehow, and cursed and swore
At something that lay across my door.
Yes, mates, IT WAS HER !—and the child was dead,
With the rain beating down on her little head !

.
The rest of the tale I had from Mike :—
She had put him to bed so mother-like :
She had sold her boots and her ragged shawl,
And on food for him she had spent it all !

And she had been ill with a terrible cough :
'Twas the cough and the starving had carried her off ;
But she said, though she ached in every limb,
'It is Saturday night,—I must go for him.'

Then Mike had told her that he would go ;
But he said that she gave him a quiet ' No :
For you see, Mike, you don't understand,
When he's drunk he wants such a careful hand.'

And when Mike had finished his baby prayer,
She had started out, and had fallen there,
Going to bring me home !—Do you think
That after that I could hold to the drink ?

If you do, you can never understand
How I still feel the touch of that little hand,
And how sometimes from heaven I hear her say,—
'Come along, dada, home's this way !'

*HYMNS.

CONFIRMATION.

When Thy soldiers take their swords,
 When they speak the solemn words,
 When they kneel before Thee here
 Feeling Thee, their Father near ;
 These Thy children, Lord, defend,
 To their help, Thy Spirit send.

When the world's sharp strife is nigh,
 When they hear the battle-cry,
 When they rush into the fight,
 Knowing not temptation's might ;
 These Thy children, Lord, defend,
 To their zeal, Thy wisdom lend.

When their hearts are lifted high
 With success or victory,
 When they feel the conqueror's pride—
 Lest they grow self-satisfied—
 These Thy children, Lord defend,
 Teach their souls to Thee to bend.

* Written for the boys of Cheltondale.

When the vows that they have made,
When the prayers that they have prayed,
Shall be fading from their hearts ;
When their first warm faith departs,
 These Thy children, Lord, defend,
 Keep them faithful to the end.

Through life's conflict guard us all,
Or, if wounded, some should fall
Ere the victory be won ;
For the sake of Christ Thy Son,
 These Thy children, Lord defend,
 And in death Thy comfort lend.

GOD'S WORKMEN.

God's workmen are a glorious band,
 They work with all their might,
 And with their best of heart and hand
 They labour for the right.

God's workmen have a noble task,
 To help their brother-men,
 To root out sin, to build in truth,
 To make earth pure again.

God's workmen need not be ashamed
 If all their work should fail ;
 Though truth and right be often blamed
 They must at last prevail.

God's workmen need not faint or fall
 Though working days be long :
 The Master's Hand is with them all
 And He can make them strong.

God's workmen follow Christ their Head
 And He with them is one ;
 Like Him, they joyfully go home
 When this life's work is done.

JOY.

What is joy that we may taste it
While the hours fleet so fast ?
Time is joy unless we waste it
In a joy that will not last.

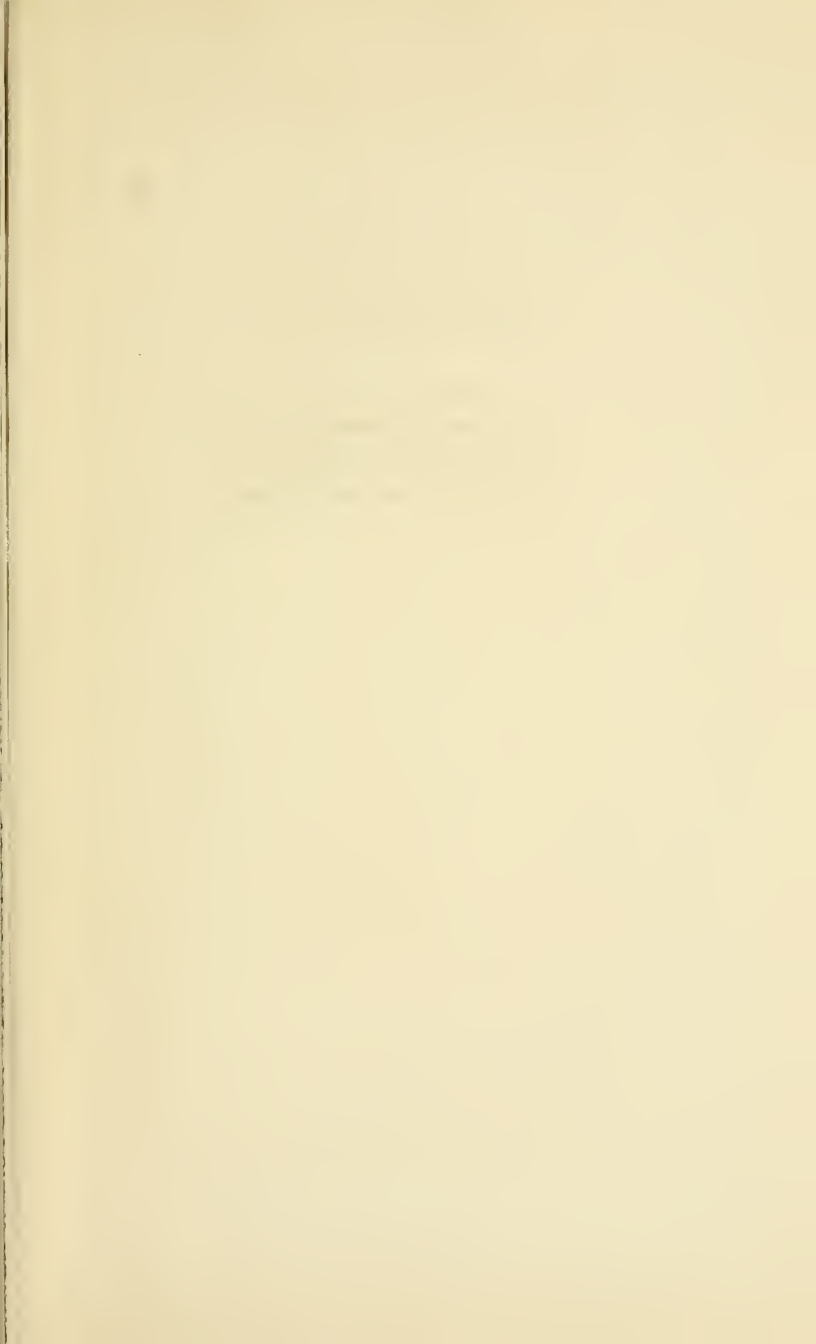
Love is joy—when we bestow it
On the highest and the best !
Love is joy and we shall know it
When we love the Holiest.

Work is joy—when we are working
For the love of God and man,
When no selfish thought is lurking
In the life-work that we plan.

Life is joy—when God has given
Light that we may truly see,
Life is joy when we have striven
Ever to live faithfully.

Death is joy—when we are going
To our Father's life above,
And a joy beyond our knowing
Lies in Heaven's work and love.

Refrain As God has given—so let us give,
As we would die—so let us live,
As God wills it—such let it be,
The joy of Life and Eternity.

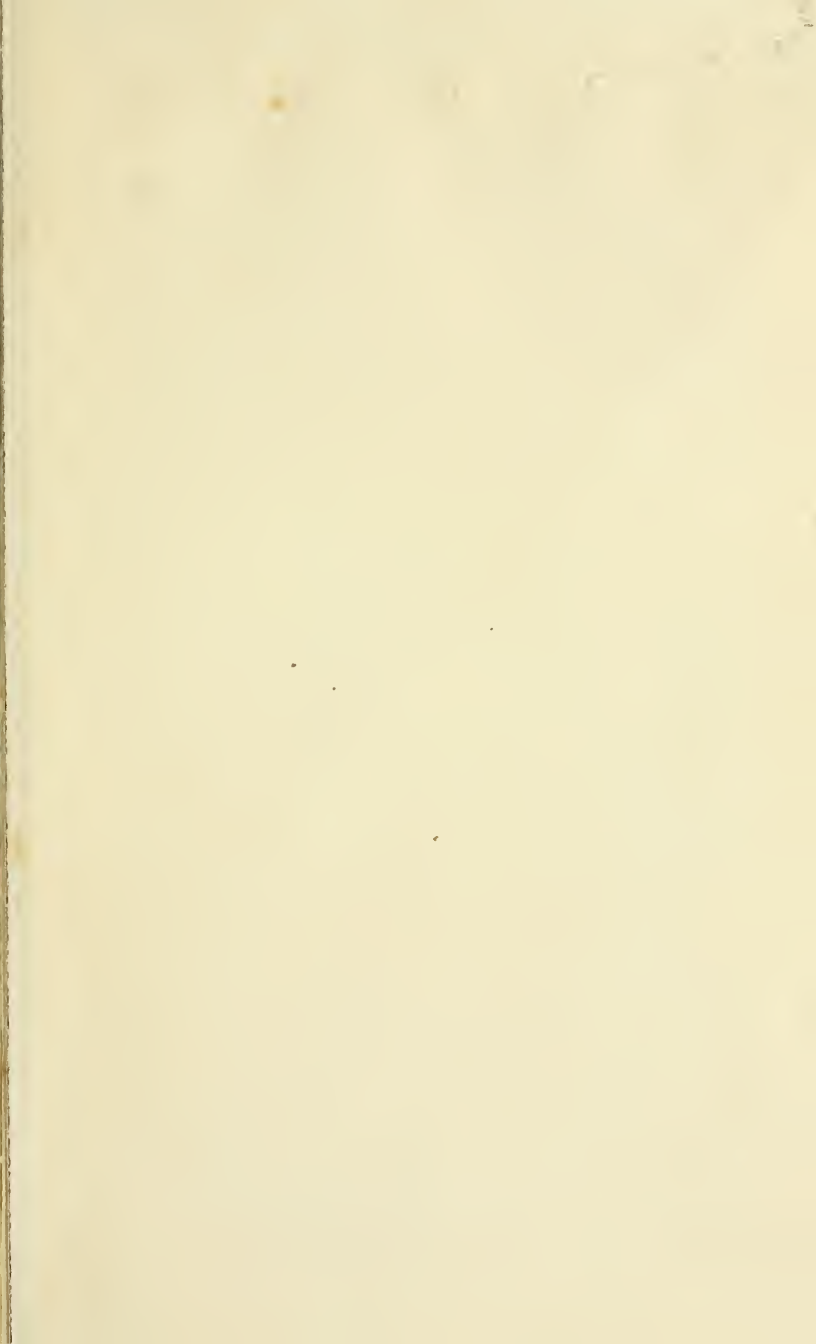


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